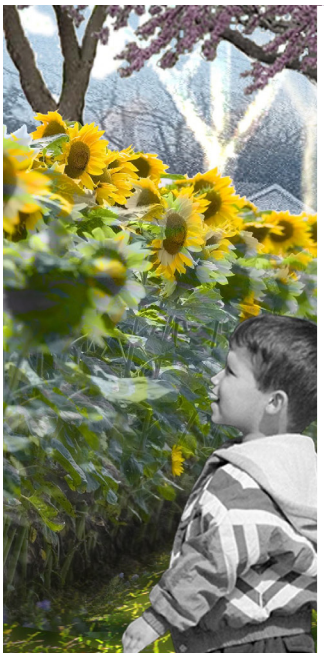
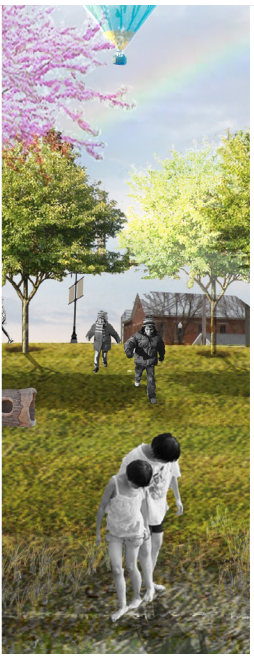
REDEFINING THE STEREOTYPICAL

PLAY◦GROUND◦◦

A Park Design for New Bremen, Ohio





a comprehensive undergraduate thesis by:

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REDEFINING THE STEREOTYPICAL PLAYGROUND:

A Park Design for New Bremen, Ohio

LA404: Comprehensive Project
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ABSTRACT

This project examined the current formula for playground design and redefined how we view spaces for play. It exemplified that a playground can become more than simply the overused scene of manufactured elements grouped together atop a bed of mulch. Though playground design has evolved over the years from being a place for only the elite to a common element of public parks, little has changed since the early twentieth century. By recognizing that there are still great opportunities to take hold of in terms of designing for play, we can create more suitable spaces for the children of today. Significantly changing the way we approach playground design allows for better spaces that enhance creativity and spark imagination in children of all ages.

The project exemplified this concept through the design of a park in New Bremen, Ohio. It took a previously underutilized space, located in the heart of the village, and transformed it into an imaginative playspace for all to enjoy. As children slide, swing, run, climb, explore, and laugh amidst the redesigned green space, businesses and nearby properties relish in the economic benefits it brings to the community. The designer's knowledge of the psychology of play and its importance in children's lives was evident as play elements and spaces directly cater to its young users. Furthermore, as New Bremen's dynamic history and rich culture was incorporated into the design, visitors undoubtedly recognize that this unique playspace was designed solely for them. New Bremen's new playspace serves as the frontrunner for the new wave of innovative playground design. Not only does it provide others with an example of the limitless possibilities we have yet to discover in terms of designing for play, but it also provides the New Bremen community with a valuable, one-of-a-kind asset that fosters community and creates identity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A BIG, WARM & HEART-FELT THANKS TO:

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INTRODUCTION

I must laugh and dance and sing
Youth is such a lovely thing
Soon I shall be too old, stately
I shall promenade sedately
Down a narrow pavement street
And the people that I meet
Will be still and narrow too
Careful what they say and do
It will be quite plain to see
They were never young like me
When I walk where flowers grow
I shall have to stoop down low
If I want one for a prize
Now I'm just the proper size
Let me laugh and dance and sing
Youth is such a lovely thing

Child, age 13
(Wilkinson 32-33)

As this child discovers the beauty in being young, the greater population struggles at recognizing its irreplaceable splendor. Children develop this perspective of a grown-up world in which dullness reigns and play and creativity cease to exist. Perhaps if designers were to develop spaces for play that went beyond the worn out playground of Anywhere, America, children would be more apt to view their future world in the same manner they do today. Bringing creativity back to the playground would demonstrate that adults too recognize the beauty of being a kid. And as we create more innovative spaces in which children can laugh, dance, sing, and celebrate being a child, we inadvertently will create more dynamic places that create identity and foster community.

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THE RESEARCH

1.1 Review Of Literature

[A] Natural Play v. Equipment-Based Design

[B] Understanding Child's Play

[C] Economic Impact of Parks

1.2 Survey Summary

[A] NATURAL PLAY V. EQUIPMENT-BASED DESIGN

Hendricks boldly states that "children's playgrounds are filled with play equipment that adults want to give children, not with the things that children want to play with" (7). She, as well as Baker, Bishop, Bundy, and Fjørtoft, has published various works that attempt to understand not only what play environments are most beneficial to children, but also what kids want to play with. As each author explores different playground types and/or contemporary issues, we, as designers, are better able to create innovate design solutions that will challenge society's established idea of a playground. We can evaluate the issues and benefits associated with both equipment-based design and natural play spaces in order to develop a new age definition of the word.

NATURAL PLAY

Some consider natural playgrounds as that modern way to address how children play. They are increasingly gaining popularity, specifically in northern European countries like Germany and Sweden (Hendricks 203). Generations prior, children had wild lands to explore and natural environments in which to learn. Today, such areas are less prevalent and their value towards a child's development is not cherished (Fjørtoft 22). Only recently have the benefits of natural playscapes been re-discovered. A study done in Norway compared children whom played on a traditional playground with ones who were given a natural playscape in which to roam. The results found that kids whom played in the natural setting showed a greater increase in balance, coordination, creativity, and overall fitness (Fjørtoft). Even though manufactured equipment is designed to promote these same qualities and skills, children seemed less likely to explore its potential.

Although such comparisons prove the physical and cognitive benefits of natural playgrounds, it is difficult to pinpoint exactly why they are more successful. Perhaps it is the ever changing attributes of the natural

playground that attracts kids to a space. Topography and vegetation alone allow for countless different design configurations that challenge the child (Fjørtoft 22). These elements are not seen in the traditional, flat, asphalt-covered playground. Or maybe the natural playground's success can be attributed to the introduction of loose parts. Loose elements allow a specific play space to constantly evolve as children construct imaginative worlds. Stones are used to build towers, twigs and leaves are gathered for pretend play, and sand is dug and moved (Hendricks 93). The environment is constantly changing. Hendricks writes that water "moves, it changes the colour of the sand, it can be manipulated, it drips,...it makes noise, [and] it can be dammed up" (92). And I assure you that nothing which appeals so directly to a child's senses can be found in a catalog.

EQUIPMENT-BASED PLAY

Of the constructed play world, however, there was once "a (brief) time in America, [when] a playground...was as coveted as an edgy new museum or concert hall" (Bishop 154). Evidence of this is exemplified in the work of past playground leader Richard Dattner's designs. His five different play spaces, located in Central Park and done in the 1960s, each engaged the user in a new way and were soundly based on psychologists' understanding of play (Bishop 158). Now however, the built playground is described differently. They have become mass-produced gatherings of brightly colored play elements and are quite adequately labeled as the McDonald's of the landscape (Baker 42). Travel to any corner of the globe and one can see and experience the same. It's as if only a handful of rubber stamps are available when drawing up the plans (Hendricks 18).

We are quick to shoot down this monotonous playground scene, but the truth is that it does allow children to the opportunity to play. Countless studies demonstrate that children like to both swing and slide, two basic elements found on every "monotonous" playground (Hendricks 71). The problem is not that these toys fail to allow for such activities, but that they

continue to do so in the same manner. As the play space of today continues to take shape, it is important that designers continue to support the basic desires of the kids who will use them (Hendricks 71).

Perhaps the solution is not taking out this equipment altogether but rather, to edit its use so that manufactured elements better fit in to the overall design of the play space. Memorial Playground, located in Wilsonville, Oregon and completed in 2006, does a brilliant job at actualizing this idea. It merged the site's existing natural features with purchased play equipment to create a series of unique, open-ended play spaces that blur the line between spaces for spectators and spaces for play (Baker 42,46).

THE ISSUE OF RISK

But despite such innovation, the biggest issue in the equipment-based world of playground design still exists: how much risk should be allowed? Over the past few decades, fear of lawsuits seems to have detracted designers from putting any creativity into the very places where imagination should be running rampant. The seesaw and merry-go-round were the first elements to be censored in the United States, and the swing set is now increasingly being threatened (Baker 44). Society wants children to grow and learn about the world through play, yet the spaces for play restrict them from doing so. The I Ching states that "those with little experience have little wisdom" (Hendricks 63). Risk is not only part of the thrill of playing, but an essential part of acquiring knowledge.

"those with little experience have little wisdom"

And how much injury are we really protecting our children from? When comparing the number of injuries to those acquired from indoor items like beds and stairs, playground bumps and bruises rank relatively low (Hendricks 62). Additionally, a study done in 2009 found that observers often perceive a greater risk than what truly exists. After giving children loose elements with which to push, pull, lift, and stack, studies showed that parents' and teachers' stress levels rose even though no child was injured (Bundy 43). So

why are playground policies tightening? Campaigning to safeguard relaxed playground guidelines may be the first step in generating the play space of tomorrow. Lady Allen, Landscape Architect and child advocate once stated "better a broken arm than a bruised spirit" (Bishop 154). I could not agree with this more.

While I may agree that more risk should be allowed in the play environment, designers should see this issue as a challenge and face it head on. Part of the magic of design is implementing creative solutions that fit within such framework, and New Bremen's proposed play space is no exception. The park combines elements from both natural and equipment-based play to take advantage of the benefits offered of each. Rugged and organic elements offer children a place to freely explore their natural world as they meld with those traditional components that encourage active play. By doing so, New Bremen's new park overcomes the current issues with playgrounds today and exemplifes the immense benefits a well-designed play space is capable of producing.

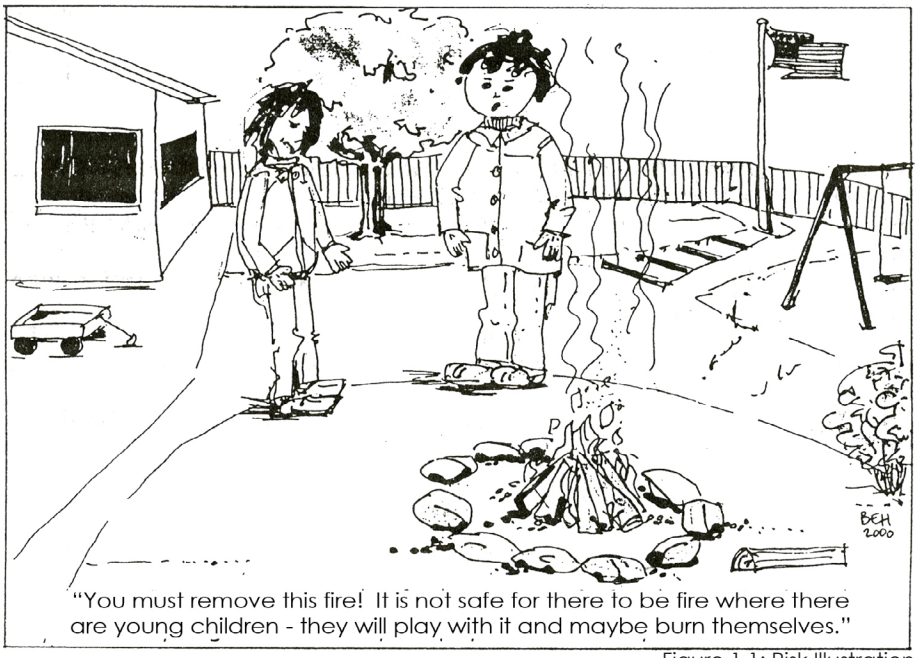

Figure 1.1: Risk Illustration

[B] UNDERSTANDING CHILD'S PLAY

Too often playgrounds are designed by individuals who know something about spatial layout, but nothing about children or play (Hendricks 7). Though the resulting space will most likely suffice, it will lack that personable quality which nonverbally communicates to the user that this space was designed for them. In order to design for play, it is essential that one understands play. Authors Wilkinson, Frost, Hall, Henig, and Hendricks have all addressed the subject and published works that discuss play's history, role, and benefits within our society.

Play's importance to western culture dates back to the eighteenth century when it was recognized by playwright and scholar Friedrich Schiller in his work entitled Aesthetic Letters (Hall 40). In them, Schiller wrote that man "is only completely a man when he plays" and "man is never so serious as when he plays" (Hall 40). Though play as a topic for research has since gone on to be studied by individuals like Karl Groos and Sigmund Freud, we have yet to fully understand its function. Hendricks suggests that "play is such an intrinsic part of being human that it is difficult for us to get the scientific distance to study it" (7). And though it is challenging to wrap our heads around its role in humanity, no one seems to debate its value. It is even recognized at the governmental level as cities allocate funds to fulfill their duty of creating special and challenging outdoor play environments for children (Hendricks 9). So, yes, society holds play to some high importance, but why?

PLAY-AS-PREPARATION

One popular theory is the play-as-preparation concept. This model was influenced by the work of Darwin and suggests that an individual plays to practice skills that they will need later in life (Frost 4). By observing both animal and human subjects, one can see the potential for this theory to be valid. Young wolves bite and wrestle, for example, when they are engaged in

play. Both of these actions are talents that the adult animal will need later in life as they hunt for prey with their pack (Henig 42). In humans, one can furthermore visualize how a child hammering colored wood blocks relates to common adult roles. Though this theory of playing to prepare for "reality" resonates with many, the issue is that there is minimal scientific evidence to support its claims. A Scottish study displayed how two different groups of kittens showed no difference in skills as adults despite the fact that one group was allowed objects to interact with when they were young (Henig 42).

Perhaps the reason that children play is instead related to the fact that they are able to test out actions and emotions too dangerous to experience in everyday life. As long as every child understands that it is just play, kids often use role playing as a way to learn the rejection of a friend, for example, or of anger or love (Hendricks 13). A ferocious dragon may attack their fort and they are thus called upon to be brave. Whatever the situation, role playing's prevalence in a child's life suggests that it must serve some benefit. On average, pretend play occupies approximately twenty percent of a four-year-old child's day (Henig 60). Play scholar Brain Sutton-Smith specifically talks of role playing's benefits by stating that "children learn all those necessary arts of trickery, deception, harassment, divination and foul play that their teacher won't teach them but are most important in successful human relationships in marriage, business and war" (Henig 75).

"pretend play occupies 20% of a 4-year-old child's day"

PLAY'S BENEFITS

Play's benefits themselves may provide us with an answer as to why children engage in play. A superior play environment nurtures development in terms of areas like a child's physical fitness, intelligence, creativity, self-confidence, cooperation, responsibility, sense of humor, and individuality (Wilkinson 23). It can be summed up by stating that "through play children develop mastery of their physical and social environment" (Frost 21). Yet while these aspects do prove that playing is advantageous to the child, they too cannot be

accredited with the reason as to why play is a part of our lives. Things like cognitive flexibility, creative problem-solving, and motor development could all be mastered through given instruction (Henig 75).

Stating that the reason young people engage in play is unknown is not to discredit its importance in our ever evolving world. Listen to a child's laughter or witness their joy and one will know that play is worthwhile. No scientific research is needed to convey that fact. Children gain pleasure through play and derive happiness from their ability to master skills (Frost 21). With recess time slowly diminishing we recognize that today, more than ever, it is important that we acknowledge play's part in every person's development. And as we continue to research the psychology of play we must continue to develop creative spaces that promote such natural laughter and wholesome joy.

Figure 1.2: Pretend Play

To design for children means to design flexible spaces that are able to cater to a child's immense world of pretend. Whether play is used to prepare for adulthood, to learn of complicated emotion, to physically and cognitively develop, or to fulfill some other unknown necessity, the truth is that play is highly prevalent in a child's everyday life. As an informed designer, one should allow for spaces where children can play house and take on the roles of adults, as well as act out huge battles and experience defeat. All popular theories were adequately supported in creating New Bremen's proposed playspace because although the theory of play and its significance is debatable, its presence is undoubtedly cherished. After all, "look at life without play, and it's not much of a life" (Henig 75).

[C] THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF PARKS

Rogers, Harnik and Welle have all written pieces that weigh the economic value of a public park. From their articles, as well as studied case studies, one finds that the flow of money and its correlation to public green space can be examined on a variety of levels. Not only do successful parks provide users with direct savings and cities with an increased common wealth, but nearby businesses and properties also benefit.

PROPERTY VALUE & CITY WEALTH

The simplest benefit to quantify is the increased property value and positive business jump for those properties surrounding the park. Welle and Harnik state that properties within 500 feet of any park one acre in size or greater will experience a significant increase in hedonic value (1). And as property value increases, a city's collective wealth does as well. A study done in Washington, D.C. found that annually, approximately seven million dollars of the total collected property tax could be attributed to parks (Harnik 2). As for the increased business for local entrepreneurs, it can be said that a well-designed park not only attracts nearby residents, but also those individuals who reside beyond its immediate vicinity. There is a direct relationship between open space and tourism. In 1995, the U.S. Forest Service properties attracted nearly twenty-eight million visitors, whom, in turn, produced $401 million in revenue for surrounding local businesses (Rogers 27). A study was also done in San Diego in 2006. This survey found that 22% of day visitors were visiting the city because of a park and on average, those visitors spent $48 per day (Harnik 4). Such information proves that parks of any kind play a vital role in a community's economy. Therefore, a city's investment in public park space is economically smart.

IMPACT OF PARK QUALITY

The quality of the developed park, however, does play a role in its success. Public spaces that include recreational opportunities, natural elements, are

aesthetically attractive, and are well maintained are a few characteristics directly associated with positive economic value (Harnik 1). Therefore, everything begins with design (and ends with upkeep). The elements and creativity put into a space have an effect on its economic value. While research that quantifies a park's quality and evaluates its exact relationship to economic value is difficult to correlate and still continues, this statement is universally held to be true. Meridian Hill Park in Washington, D.C., for example, does add value to the ample amounts of dwelling units that surround this green space (Harnik 1). It is difficult, however, to quantify how these numbers would change if the park quality differed because of the multiple other factors that could also be said to come into play.

IMMEASURABLE BENEFITS

But there are also those economic benefits that are not directly measurable. Public parks offer people a free place to engage in play, picnicking, sports, etc. Engaging in each of these activities has a price tag in the private sector. Harnik points out other ways that park users directly save money. He writes of "the medical savings realized by city residents because of park exercise" and the service hours volunteers put in to keeping parks beautiful (8-9). These sometimes overlooked savings can be just as valuable as the before-mentioned earnings.

"Public parks offer people a free place to engage in play"

The notion of parks having economic value is not, however, a new concept. "As early as the 1850s, landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted justified the purchase of land for New York's Central Park by noting that the rising value of adjacent property would produce enough in taxes to pay for the park"(Rogers 21). But because of Olmsted's great success, individuals may assume that any allocated public green space will have the same result. I, however, believe that economic success also has a lot to do with innovation and the amount of draw factor your design includes. David Rockwell, a contemporary leader in playground design, exemplified this point with his creation of New York City's new Imagination Playground (Figure 1.3). The

Figure 1.3: Imagination Playground

play space was funded, in part, by economic development money, and therefore, its success won't be measured by the excitement of children, but "if we hear squeals of laughter from business owners and condo developers who suddenly have a unique, kid-packed amenity to help them sell" (Smith). Had Rockwell placed your stereotypical playground components within the same space, I would imagine that its capacity to economically stimulate the surrounding area would not be felt.

The reviewed literature and case studies demonstrate the vital role parks play in contributing to local economic systems. Because the designer developed New Bremen's green space into an aesthetically pleasing and programmatically desirable play space, its effects reach far beyond the park's limits. Not only are community members able to share in its direct savings, but surrounding businesses also profit from park visitors. Furthermore, an increase in property value pleases owners and allows the city to gain more money from its taxation. At a time when individuals are still hesitant about the security of our greater economy, the design of a play park is exactly what our community needs to stimulate cash flow.

1.2 SURVEY SUMMARY

QUESTIONAIRE

1. What is your favorite place? Why?
2. How often do you go to a park or playground?
3. How do you get there?
4. Draw a playground!
5. What do you like most about playgrounds?
6. What do you like least about playgrounds?
7. What would your dream play space be like? Draw it!
8. How much do you know about New Bremen's history?

   Nothing A Little A Lot

Figure 1.4: Survey Questions

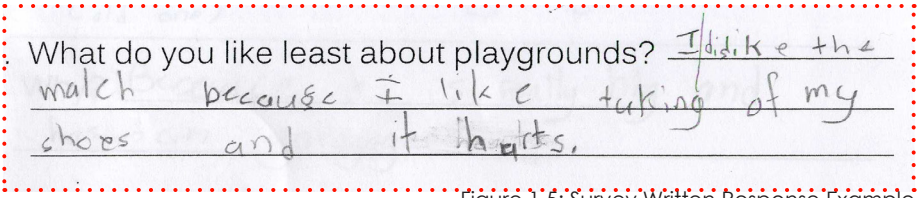

Figure 1.5: Survey Written Response Example

CONCLUSION

The depicted survey (Figure 1.4) was completed by approximately seventy New Bremen Elementary School fourth grade students via teachers Darlene Gilberg, Jodi Lange and Becky Keller. Comparing the results to those of past surveys, this study provided the designer with an understanding of how children's view of playgrounds has changed over the last few decades. It was used to specifically evaluate how New Bremen's children view their playgrounds today. The results influenced design, as desirable and not-so-desirable issues were brought to light. Question number seven was critical to inspiring the final design, as children's dream play spaces could ultimately be made into a reality.

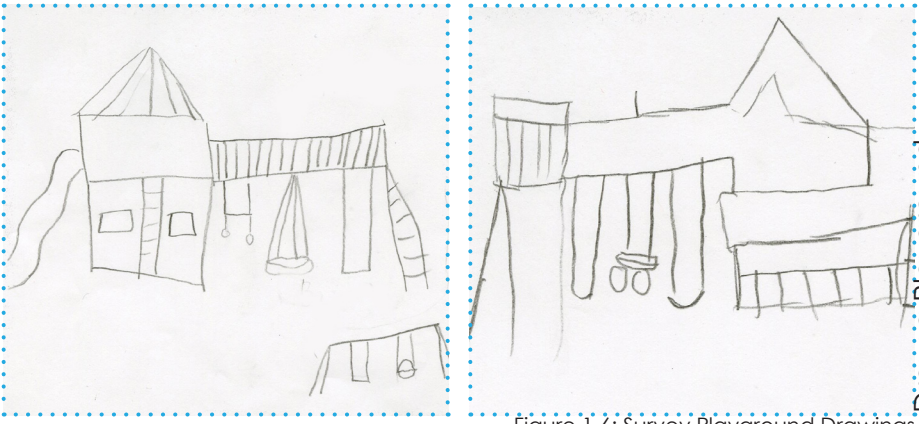

Figure 1.6: Survey Playground Drawings

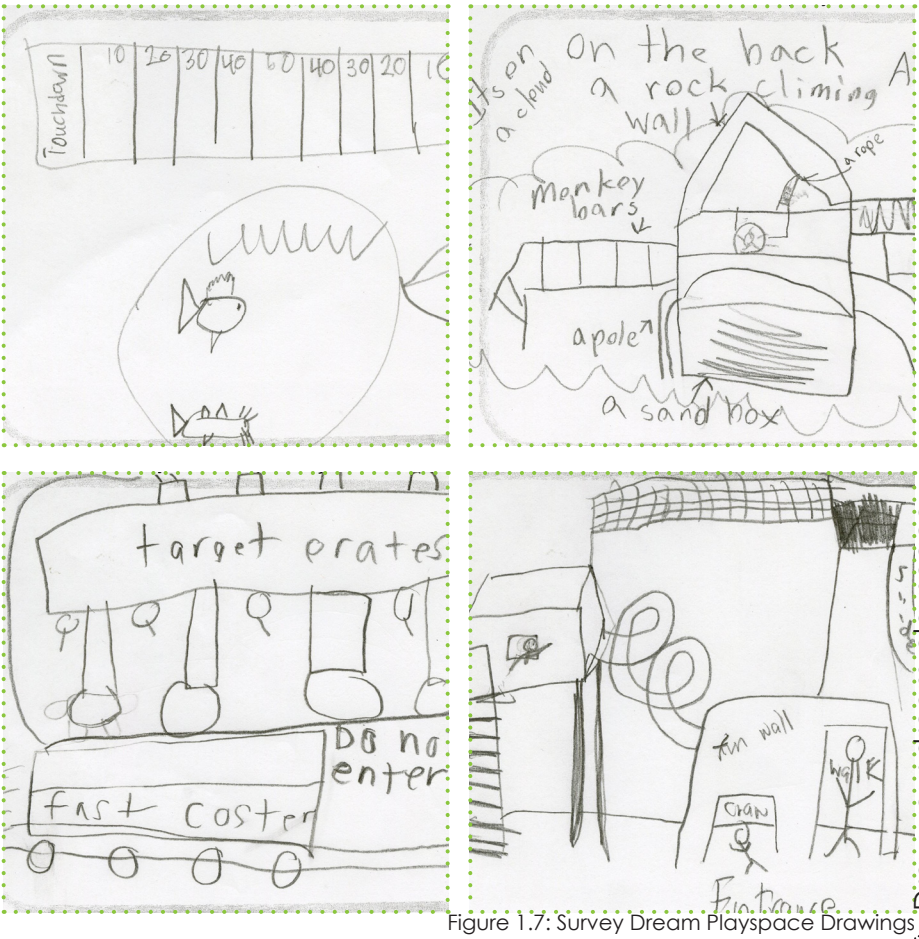

Figure 1.7: Survey Dream Playspace Drawings


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THE PROBLEM

02

2.1 Problem Statement

2.2 Subproblems

2.3 Hypothesis

2.4 Definitions

2.5 Delimitations

2.6 Assumptions

2.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

This study proposes to design a park in New Bremen, Ohio that focuses on redefining the stereotypical playground. The benefits of natural play areas will be examined as well as the economic impact of parks on nearby businesses. The psychology of play will be investigated, and options for incorporating the site's history will also be explored.

2.2 SUBPROBLEMS

01 Investigate case studies that have redefined the stereotypical playground. (i.e. adventure playgrounds, natural playgrounds)

02 Explore the benefits natural play areas have over equipment-based designs.

03 Investigate the psychology of play and its importance in children's lives.

04 Determine the economic impact parks have on nearby businesses through the study of precedents.

05 Discover the history of the given site in New Bremen, Ohio and how that past can be used to inspire design.

2.3 HYPOTHESIS

Measurable benefits for New Bremen's children, communities, and businesses will result from the spirited implementation of a new playspace.

Today's traditional playground design represents a missed opportunity, lacking advantageous elements found in other park atmospheres such as the adventure and natural playground.

2.4 DEFINITION OF TERMS

CHILDREN refers to the group of young people whom are in the developmental stages of life and use play as a means for encouraging cognitive development, acquiring motor skills, and learning about their immediate world.

PLAYGROUND refers to the unimaginative grouping of outdoor recreational equipment (i.e. slides, swings, seesaws) atop a flat surface to encourage play.

PLAYSPACE refers to the innovative incorporation of outdoor recreational equipment with the natural environment to create open-ended and unique areas for play.

RISK refers to a potentially hazardous challenge found in the play environment which the child is aware of and yet still chooses to interact with.

2.5 DELIMITATIONS

This project will not include sources of funding.
This project will not include a complete set of construction details.
This project will not include a maintenance schedule for playground upkeep after completion.

2.6 ASSUMPTIONS

Land defined by project limit line is developable for use as a public park.
Buildings and uses surrounding project site will remain the same.
Buildings and structures on site will remain.
All proposed playground equipment will follow ASTM standards.


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THE PROJECT

3.1 PROJECT SIGNIFICANCE

Figure 3.1: Playground of Anywhere, America

Too often we view playgrounds as manufactured slides, see-saws, and similar products set over a bed of mulch and surrounded by a sea of asphalt. But these seemingly mass-produced playgrounds contradict the very essence of the word. To play is to be imaginative – to invent your own, unique world. How can a child realistically dream of new places if we set the example that all of ours are the same? Significantly changing the way we approach playground design will allow for better spaces that enhance creativity and spark imagination in children of all ages.

When specifically speaking of New Bremen, Ohio, this project's significance becomes even more apparent. The proposed park will transform a currently underused space into a valuable asset for the village as a whole. Children will be offered a unique and safe playspace in which to dream, develop and learn, businesses will celebrate the increase in commerce, and all will enjoy the aesthetically pleasing green space now resting in the town's core. Additionally, the community's identity will be celebrated as residents and visitors alike explore New Bremen's history through play. By incorporating elements of New Bremen's past, the playspace will forever embody the innate qualities which shaped the city's evolution. And as children learn about a world past, they are able to better understand, and playfully interact, with their world of today.

3.2 PROJECT GOALS

01 Merge spaces for spectators with spaces for play.

- Encourage adults to observe from the center of the play area instead of the outside, in order to promote more interaction.
- Design shared space elements to be used for play and seating in order to allow active use during all hours of the day.

02 Integrate natural, adventure, and traditional play.

- Utilize existing vegetated areas for natural play; maintain earth tones.
- Locate adventure play where there is the highest contrast in topography; introduce new materials and forms.
- Locate traditional play on level or low grade ground plane; integrate brightly colored equipment to communicate strong color contrasts.
- Add elements from remaining two play types into the predominant play space in order to maintain unity across site.

03 Incorporate New Bremen's history and culture into the play space.

- Use plant material to communicate site character during given time period.
- Allow play elements to reflect historical period.
- Use the site as a timeline to walk user through New Bremen's past.

04 Primarily accommodate for today's popular play theory: play is used to test emotions.

- Provide open ended play elements that could play a role in many different worlds of pretend.
- Offer children stage-like settings to play out their imaginative stories.
- Ensure that through these elements, play activities continue to encourage physical and cognitive development.

3.3 PROJECT CONSIDERATIONS & CONCERNS

Figure 3.2: Canal Boat

HISTORICAL ELEMENTS

With numerous elements embedded within New Bremen's past, the task of rationalizing which historical aspect should be used to guide design could prove to be a difficult, yet pivotal, decision. Another major design decision to consider was deciding whether to focus on one aspect of their history or to tell the story of New Bremen's complete past and those major influences that led the village to become the town we see today. Furthermore, should the playspace chronicle New Bremen's ever evolving past, ensuring that the site still works together a whole will then become the next challenge.

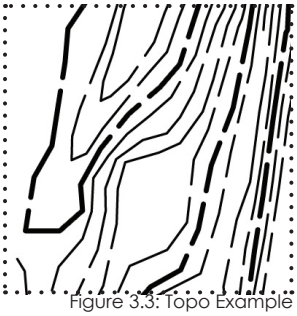


Figure 3.3: Topo Example

TOPOGRAPHY

Much of the chosen site is composed of a sloping surface that goes from the canal, on the east portion, to a creek, on the west portion. Whether the playspace is adapted to fit within these existing conditions and able to still conform to playground standards will be a major question. The slope is not gentle enough to be universally acceptable, yet not steep enough to be utilized for sledding or sliding purposes. Should the topography be changed, drainage and stormwater will need to be addressed.

Figure 3.4: Residential Backyards

SENSE OF OWNERSHIP

Because the site is located to the backs of both residential units and business entities, the idea of who feels as if they own the park will undoubtedly contribute to its success. It will be important to encourage everyone to have a sense of shared ownership to promote upkeep and encourage community.

Figure 3.5: Tow Path

VISIBILITY, ACCESS & SAFETY

Similarly, because of the park's somewhat hidden locality, visibility, access and safety become a concern. An elevated tow path runs through the site, providing pedestrian access on the eastside, but west entries are virtually nonexistent. This tow path is active during daytime hours, providing for a safe green space atmosphere during the day. But how the park is treated at night should be considered, as illegal or risky behaviors should be discouraged.

Figure 3.6: Group Play

DESIGNING FOR ALL

Though this project focuses on creating better play environments for today's children, it should not discourage play by those of other ages. Ensuring that the design caters to individuals of all developmental abilities should be a major aim of the project's outcome. Elements of universal accessibility should also be considered. Designing a playspace for everyone will only further contribute to its success.

3.4 CLIENTS

Figure 3.7: Child Sledding

CHILDREN

The primary client was children. Their wants, needs, and desires were all taken into consideration to ensure the given park appropriately reflects them and seamlessly encourages healthy development. This client served as the prime catalyst that would bring livelihood and laughter to New Bremen's new playspace.

Figure 3.8: Residential Character

RESIDENTS

The surrounding residential community was another important client, for the specified park space could be viewed as their backyard. Because select portions of the site are to be constructed through community-build teams, the sense of ownership over the area would be most strongly felt by this cliental.

Figure 3.9: Local Pharmacy

BUSINESS OWNERS

Surrounding business owners also acted as a client. It was important that this group of individuals supported the proposed playspace design so they could be assured that its success would only increase theirs.

Figure 3.10: Village Seal

VILLAGE OF NEW BREMEN

The paying client was the Village of New Bremen. It was therefore important to keep in mind that the proposed playspace should reflect the town's image as a whole and strengthen that identity. For this client, the new park would increase the city's commonwealth and create an aesthetically pleasing green space to rest in the village core.

Figure 3.11: Nature Play

ENVIRONMENT

This project spoke for the environment as well. Nature was both conserved and enhanced as healthy vegetation was left in place and additional plant life was provided for. Keeping this client in mind, existing natural systems were also preserved.

THE SETTING

4.1 SITE SUMMARY

The project site is located within New Bremen, Ohio (figure 4.1), a village of approximately 3,000 located in the west-central part of the state. Surrounding the town, the land is largely used for agricultural purposes, and this small town, farm-based character is common when looking at the site on a larger scale. The nearest city with a population greater than 50,000 is Springfield, Ohio located 46.5 miles away (City Data).

New Bremen was formed when individuals of primarily German decent traveled up the Miami-Erie Canal trading goods. The German ancestry is still prevalent in the area, as 66.9% of New Bremen residents, in 2009, were of German ancestry (City Data). Perhaps more significant however, is the fact that the canal still runs through the heart of the city, as well as through the selected project site. More can be read about the canal's impact on the area by referencing section x.x Site History. When speaking of the specific site's past, after its function as a place for canal related purposes came to an end, the land served as a junk yard until the town purchased it in the late 1960s. The green space has changed little since then.

The roughly six acre site is surrounded by residential to the west and, in a more detached way, to the east, with a large majority of these units being single family homes. The median household income in 2008 was $59,031 (City Data). Commercial and institutional entities primarily surround the remainder of the site. Select localities include a drug store, barber shop, coffee shop, one-room movie theater, bicycle museum, and public library.

Certain amenities are also offered on site. The Pavilion and sledding hill, however, are possibly the only ones viewed as active. Other, less used, elements on site include a basketball court, horseshoe pits, playground, and ample amounts of open lawn. Figures x.x through x.x help visualize the site's amenities and overall character.

Figure 4.1: Vicinity Map

4.2 SITE HISTORY

Established in the year 1833, the village of New Bremen has now had nearly two hundred years of ever changing life take place within its limits (Bernstein 5). Its past is undoubtedly rich with culturally important details and events that have helped shape the community into what it is today. By exploring the historical material made available by the Village of New Bremen, the Historic Society, Mark Bernstein and the memories of lifelong citizens, we are able to

Figure 4.2: Historic Photo of Lock Keeper's House

get a glimpse at this captivating past. Stories of New Bremen's long gone ways can then be used to inspire design and allow its citizens to not only understand the past, but also feel connected to its rich history. Exploring such sources of inspiration is thus the first step in making the proposed park a monumental success.

Running along the east side of the site is the Miami-Erie canal. It is easy to recognize that this hand dug waterway is a large part of why New Bremen exists. Settlers from the German states traveled up its waters from Cincinnati trading goods (Historic Assoc.). After the canal's official opening in 1845, hotels and other businesses began appearing and a town was

soon established at its banks (Historic Assoc.) The Miami-Erie Canal was crucial to the village's formation, still runs through the heart of the city, and lies on the edge of the project site, therefore creating a major opportunity to incorporate some breadth of its story into the new playspace design. The old cow path, however, which has since been transformed into a pedestrian and bike way, also runs alongside the canal and already tells of its evolution over time. If the Miami-Erie canal were to be the theme of the new playspace, individuals should learn and be engaged in its history in a new way.

Representing the history of the specific site is important in understanding place. Within the project's limits once sat two different buildings, one was the lock tender's house and the other the livery (Evening Leader). The village recently built a replica of the Lock Keeper's House for use by organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, but there is nothing on site that represents the past livery. If the new playspace should take on attributes of the old stable, it would adequately compliment what is already built. But throughout history, the site has also been used as farming grounds and a junk yard. Could these elements be incorporated as well? Mayor Jeff Pape talks of the site's time spent as a dump by describing a scene of old cars and Meadow Gold milk delivery trucks. This use lasted until it switched ownership in the early 1960s and became part of the Village of New Bremen's property (email). Overall, its evolution as a place brings about several sources of inspiration for playful learning experiences. A seamless journey could be represented, taking kids of all ages through the specific site's past and towards its future.

Or perhaps one should look beyond the site's boundaries for historical inspiration. The playspace could be stimulated by other aspects of New Bremen's past. Pumpkin growing is becoming ever more popular, as the village will soon hold the Guinness World record for largest pumpkin pie. The Bicycle Museum of America sits in close proximity to the site. The park would be a good way to represent the evolution of bikes throughout

the years and their direct role in the surrounding community. Another possibility is to emphasize New Bremen's German heritage, currently only found embedded in building styles and community attitudes. The common heritage has gave way to a collective group of people that are stubborn, hard-working, and most importantly, under the "cultural injunction that one be usefully engaged in something" (Bernstein 43). With the multitude of these various overarching topics, I have taken that this community need play a role in choosing what piece of history to focus on. The interactive park will

Figure 4.3: World's Largest Pumpkin Pie

not only inform future generations of New Bremen's past, but will also serve as an icon for New Bremen's future, and it is therefore important that the citizens play a role in shaping it.

Compiling the whole of New Bremen's past is also feasible. What if the proposed playspace shaped into a story that did not simply focus on one aspect, but told of all New Bremen's significant features and events? MSI Design's Discovery Frontier Playground, in fact, did just that with the city of Grove Park, Ohio. A 634 foot engraved timeline lies embedded in the walkway and outlines specific events in Grove City's past (Stretch). Its success proves that a focus on the larger picture, rather than a single time period, can work. A critique for this project, however, is that the due to its multiple

themes, children are not as engaged as they could be in the historical piece of the design. The timeline is more so to occupy the adults, whom bring children to play. If it were more engaging, both age groups would be able to benefit. New Bremen's playspace should playfully incorporate its past so that all, children, adults, residents, and visitors alike, are able to absorb and appreciate its unique story.

"New Bremen is changing...it is new, or old, depending on where one looks" (Berstein 94). The proposed park will embody both aspects, as it will be a new playspace celebrating an old, but cherished, world. Research demonstrates that this little town has an immense past. Its evolution as a place, as well as a community, makes it distinctive. Emphasizing those unique qualities will be imperative for further inspiring community and a sense of ownership among its residents. With the town's solid background of development, and proud citizens who are willing to share that past, it is only fitting that the playspace physically tell New Bremen's story. By interactively sharing New Bremen's history with children of today, and those to come, the past will never be lost. Children will grow up with the same stubborn pride for their hometown that was characteristic of generations long gone because they know, and have played in, its past.

Figure 4.4: New Bremen Historic Downtown

Figure 4.5: Bicycle Museum of America

4.3 SITE PHOTOS

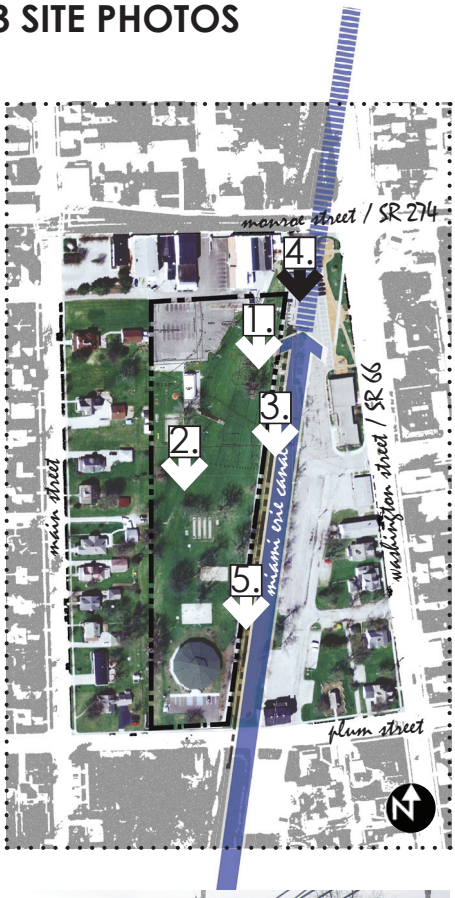


Figure 4.6: Lock Keeper's House

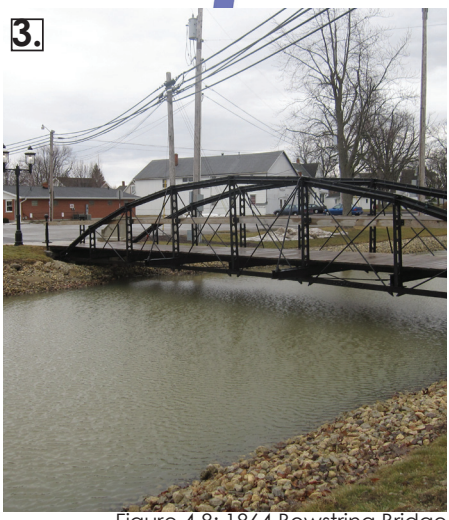


Figure 4.8: 1864 Bowstring Bridge

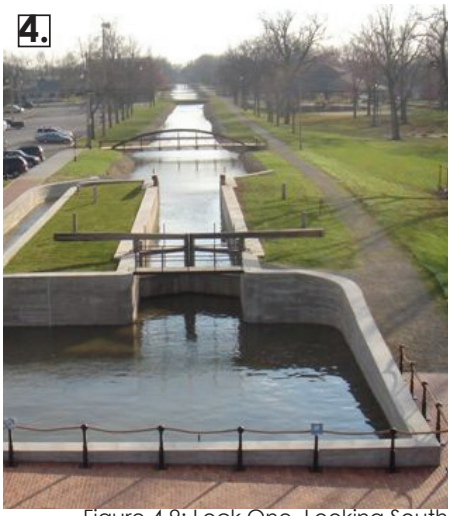


Figure 4.9: Lock One, Looking South

Figure 4.7: Creek & Pavillion, Looking South

Figure 4.10: Canal & Tow Path, Looking North

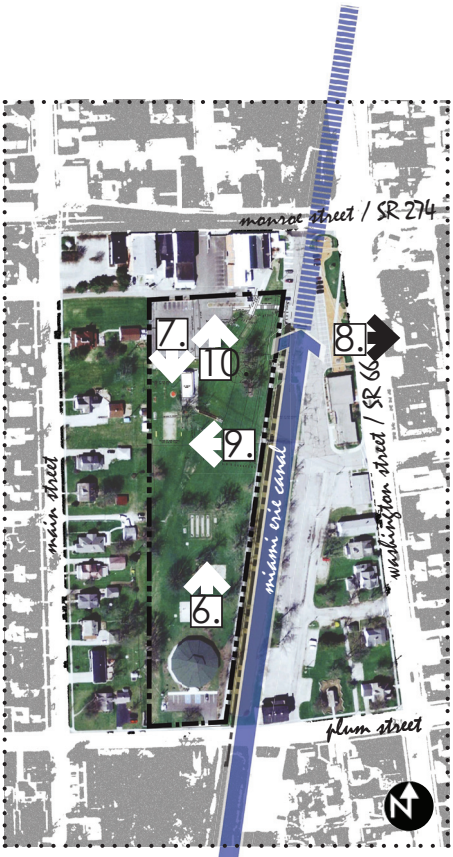


Figure 4.11: Mud Volleyball Court

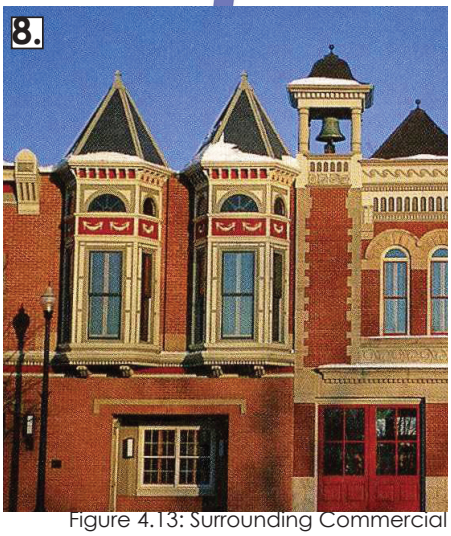


Figure 4.13: Surrounding Commercial

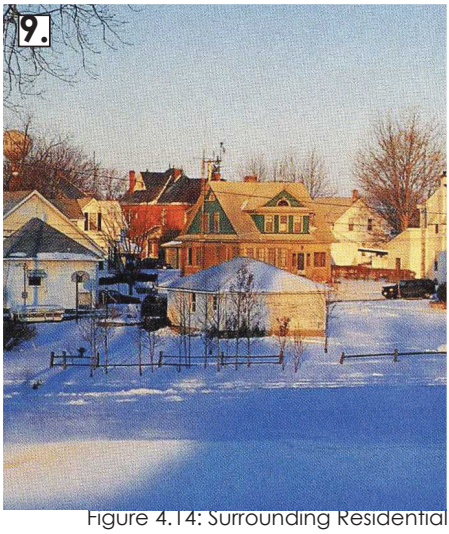


Figure 4.14: Surrounding Residential

Figure 4.12: Playground, Looking South

Figure 4.15: Parking Lot and Commercial Backs, Looking North

4.4 REGIONAL INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

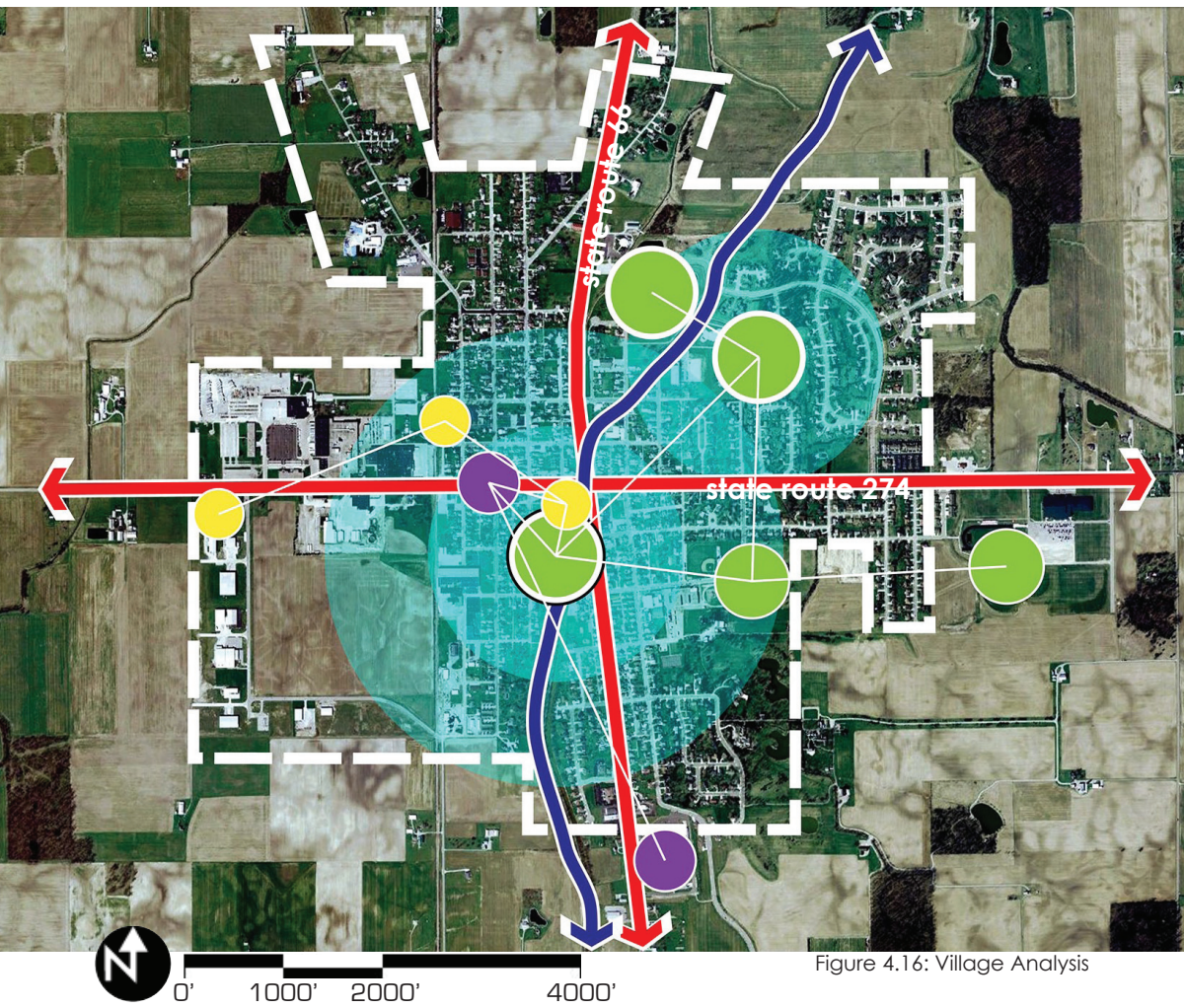


Figure 4.16: Village Analysis

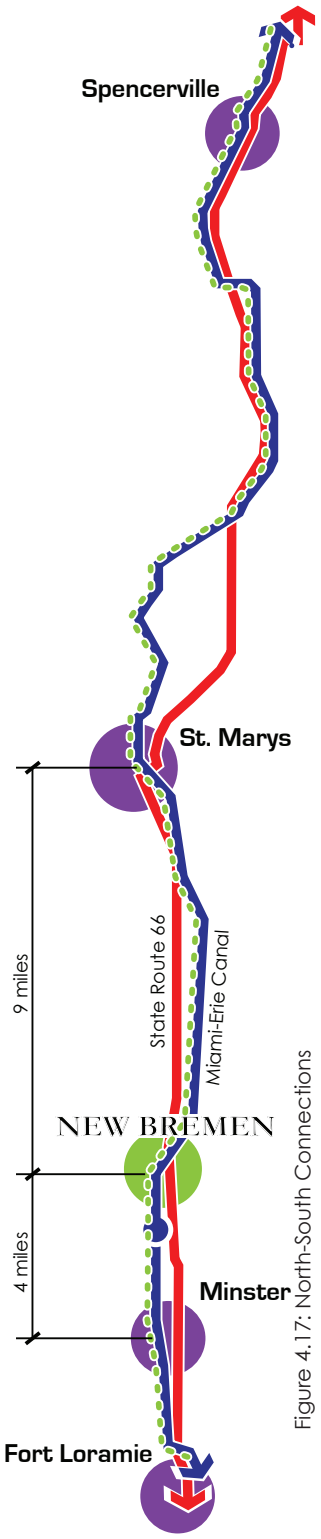


Figure 4.17: North-South Connections

VILLAGE ANALYSIS

As one can see from the diagrammatical map of New Bremen, the site (indicated by the green circle outlined in black) is located at the heart of the village [figure 4.15]. A ten minute walking distance from its center covers a approximately 65% of the town. Creating a park system connecting all primary open spaces, including localities like Bremenfest Park, a nature conservancy, and High School sports parks, would allow the site to be highly accessible by the entirety of this town. Purple circles exemplify the competing pull between New Bremen's well-kept downtown and those in the outlying strip mall. Yellow circles indicate the secondary open spaces such as a small public pond and a church picnic and play space. There exists a strong opportunity to combine all elements into a workable system through the enhancement of this core village green space.

NORTH-SOUTH CONNECTIONS

A strong north-south connection exists for promoting both vehicular and pedestrian movement to and from the site [figure 4.16]. State route 66, along with the Miami-Erie canal and adjacent tow path, successfully join the string of small towns along this vertical axis. But while there is ample opportunity for easy access to the site, it is important that there is also a strong draw factor to ensure such travel occurs. This draw factor must act as a destination for both kids and adults alike. Though children will be the primary clients of the park, adults will be the ones who ultimately choose to bring this user group to the park.

4.5 SITE INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

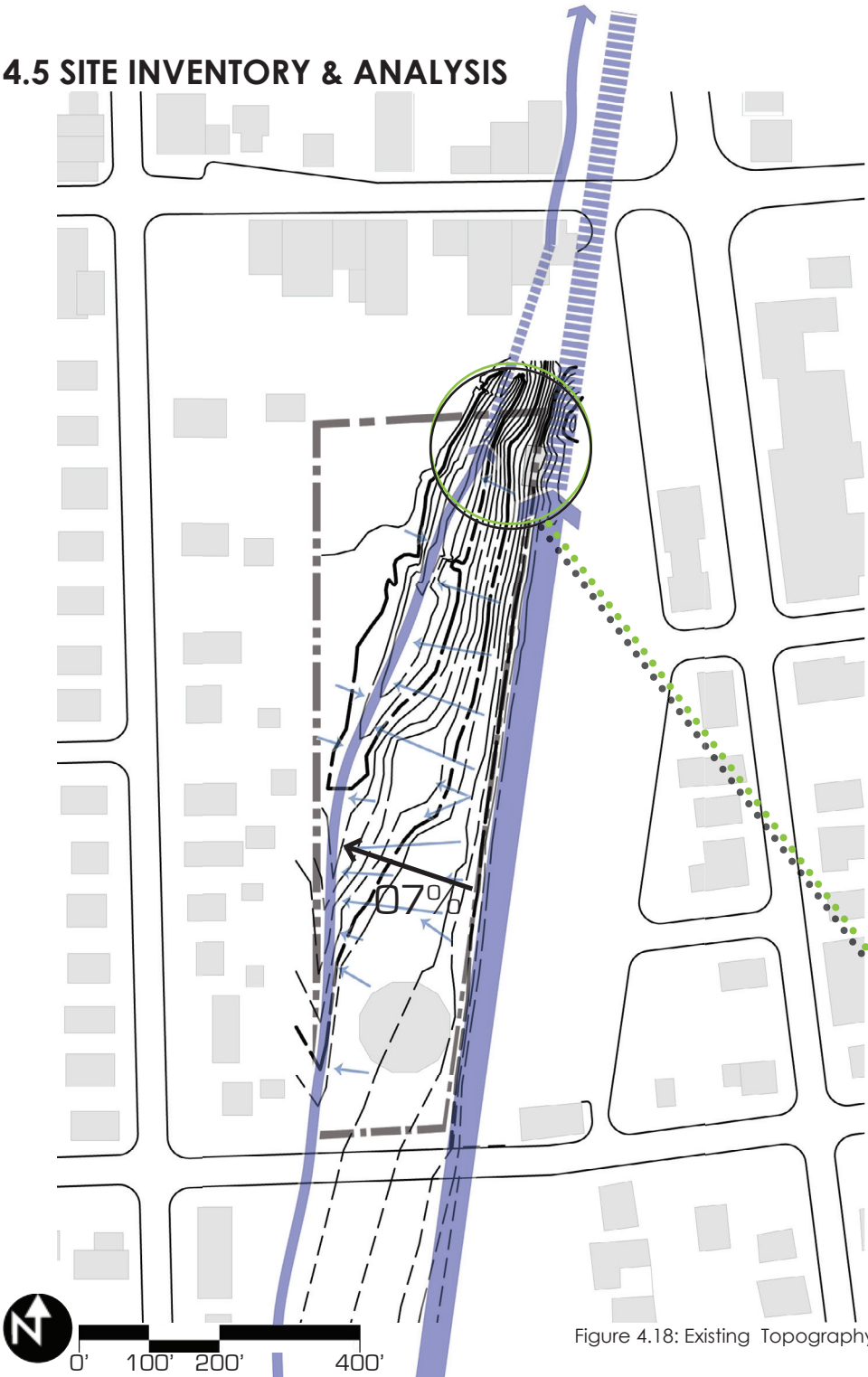


Figure 4.18: Existing Topography

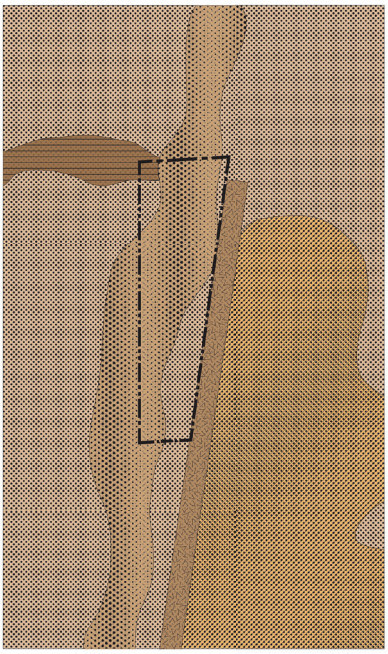


Figure 4.19: Soils

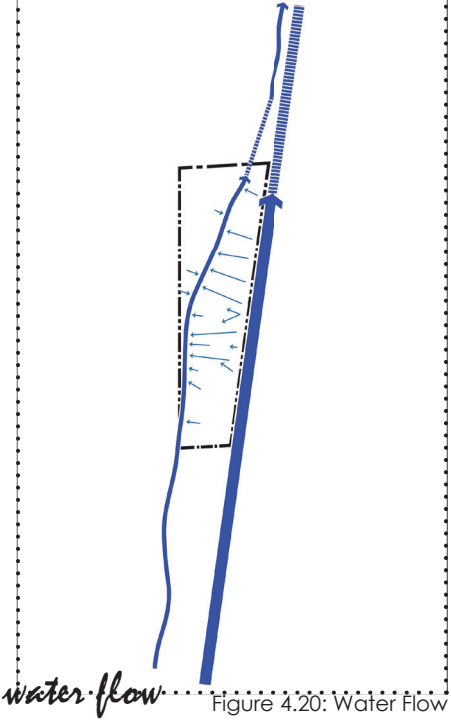


Figure 4.20: Water Flow

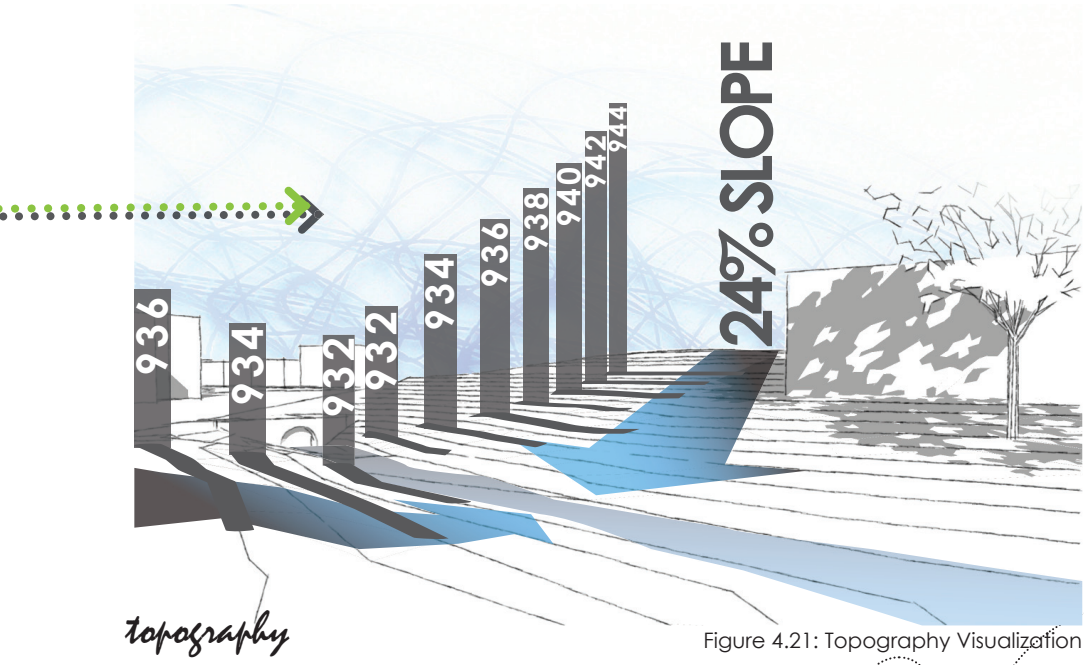
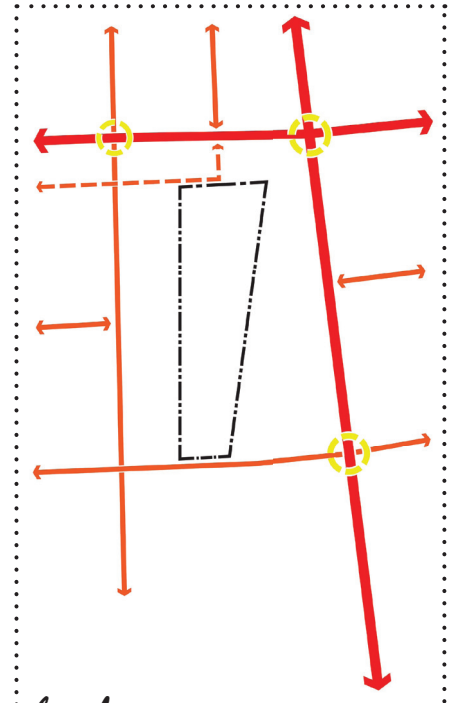
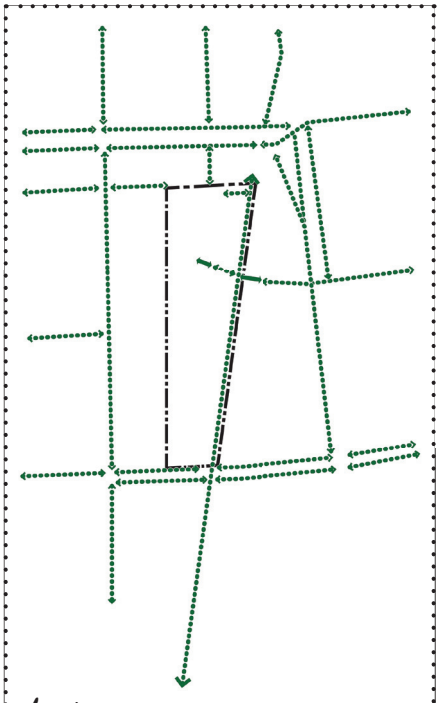


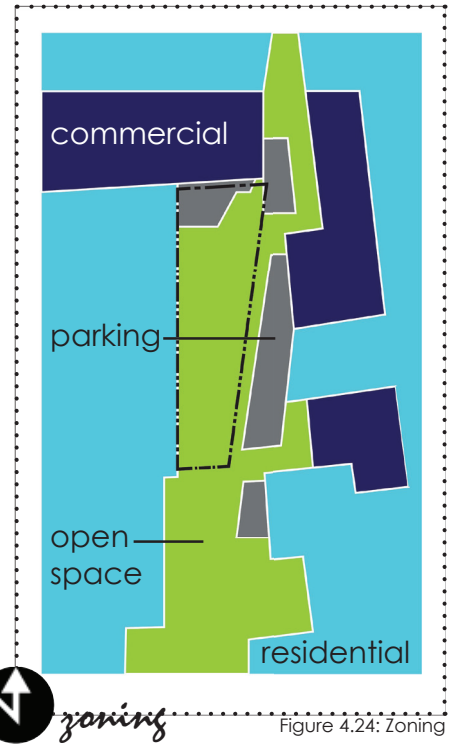
Figure 4.21: Topography Visualization



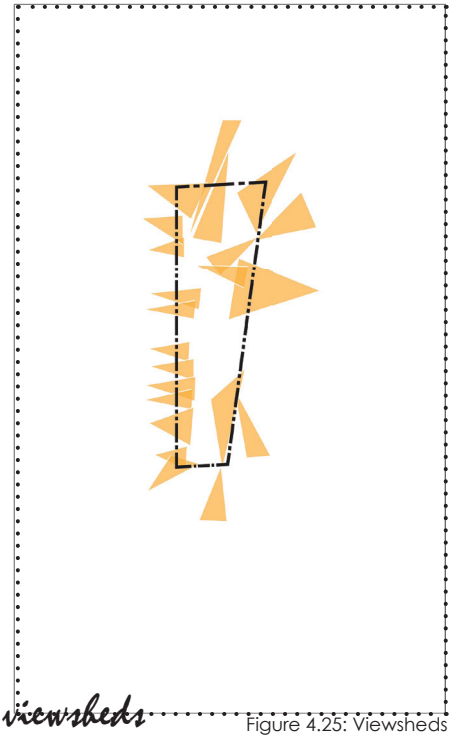
vehicular circ. Figure 4.22: Vehicular Circ.



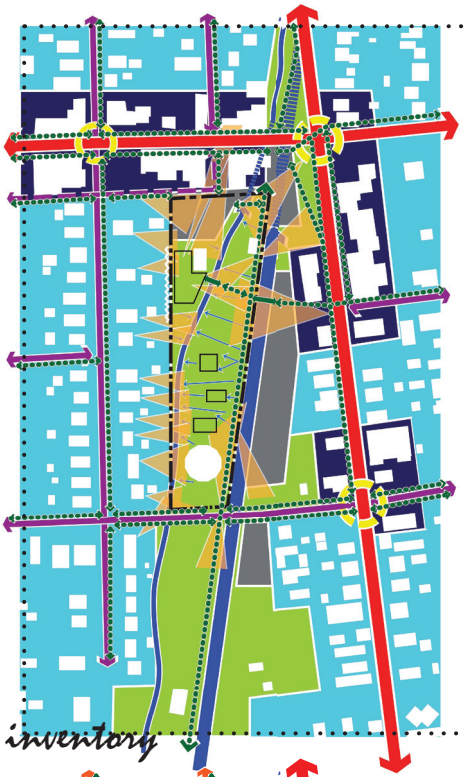
pedestrian circ. Figure 4.23: Pedestrian Circ.



zoning Figure 4.24: Zoning



viewsheds Figure 4.25: Viewsheds



INVENTORY

The diagram at left combines all individually investigated inventory layers [figures 4.18-4.19, 4.21-4.24] into one comprehensive drawing. The simplification of each system allows the success or struggling challenge of each to be brought to light. By observing at large where all these pieces overlap, the designer is better able to make analytical statements that exemplify where certain programs or design elements should take place.

Figure 4.26: Inventory

ANALYSIS

This diagram is the response to the site's voice, as heard in figure 4.25. Orange circles represent major activity nodes, while green arrows show of opportunity to connect these two areas by strengthening the tow path and green space, that currently flows through each. The need for established entry points are called out (yellow), a central node is placed to utilize viewsheds and topography (red), and the need for residential connections are indicated (grey).

Figure 4.27: Analysis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05 THE CASE STUDIES

Select playspaces scattered around the globe have gone above and beyond the stereotypical image of a playground to provide children with unique and imaginative worlds. By studying these places, one is made aware of the limitless possibilities underutilized in a majority of our current spaces designed for play. Takano Hillside Park, the St. Louis City Museum, and Belleville Park Playground however are four examples of how creativity in playground design can be achieved.

5.1 TAKANO HILLSIDE PARK

The Children's Playground at Takano Hillside Park is located in Sapporo-shi, Hokkaido, Japan and was done by Fumiaki Takano in March of 2000 (Architecture-Page). Its 400 ha were inspired by forms found in nature and are used to create a multisensory experience for young visitors (Architecture-Page). Play elements include a rainbow nest dome, ant hive tunnel, forest corridor and mid-air birds nest. Each of these play structures or environments included in the overall park design demonstrate that the designer truly understood today's children and how they play. "Keeping in mind the limited experience of children in contemporary society when faced with wild environs, the design attempts to adjust them to play in the forest gradually along a five stage program" (Architecture-Page). The knowledge of the park's users is evident in every detail of the design, and as this idea communicates directly to park users, it contributes directly to its overall success.

Figure 5.1: Takano Hillside Park Slides

Figure 5.2: Takano Hillside Park Rainbow Nest

5.2 ST. LOUIS CITY MUSEUM

When Bob Cassilly designed the St. Louis City Museum, his emphasis was not on education, but experience (Ferriss). The 600,000 square foot playspace was built within the former International Shoe Company building and uses mainly old factory and warehouse materials, obtained from no further than the city's limits, to create a magnificent world of fun (City Museum). Though some criticize the museum for being too dangerous, its existence has proven to be both successful and popular. In addition to drawing approximately 700,000 individuals of all ages to come play here each year, the City Museum has played a pivotal role revitalizing the surrounding Washington Avenue Loft District (Ferriss). By these numbers alone, one can see that creativity clearly has benefits. The innovative elements found in this playspace allow for the same climbing, swinging, and sliding movements that manufactured products embody, but package them in a more unique way. "At the "skateless park" [for example], kids run up and slide down wooden skateboard ramps now used as slides" (Dougherty). The fact that they are able to slide down something other than a red plastic slide offers children a new perspective on how they view their world that is both intriguing and fun. Innovation can equal success.

Figure 5.3: St. Louis City Museum Climbing Structure

Figure 5.4: St. Louis City Museum Rooftop Tower

5.3 BELLEVILLE PARK PLAYGROUND

Inspiration for this playground came from a photo depicting children whom had created a play space out of a series of stairs and landings (Playscapes). In 2003, Paris' Belleville Park opened and exemplified this idea of creating an atmosphere for play that wasn't simply located on a flat surface. Seeing as the site for this comprehensive project contains significant topography as well, certain principles can thus be taken from its design. The Belleville playscape incorporates a play tower, wooden bridge, climbing walls, and concrete sliding slopes (Landezine). BASE Landscape Architecture, the project's designers, state that "the playground area is a climbing course [which offers] different inclinations for different levels and age groups" (BASE). From the tower's top, parents and children alike can see the entire playground site, as well as one-of-a-kind views of the Eiffel tower. New Bremen's playspace could certain embody similar concepts should a central play tower be created that utilizes views and serves as a landmark for the surrounding area.

Figure 5.5: Belleville Park Structure

Figure 5.6: Belleville Park Concrete Incline

5.4 CONCLUSION

What these three studied precedent projects have in common is that they all have a strong, cohesive theme, all alter the way children experience the basic activities of swinging, sliding, and climbing, and all merge learning with fun. These three uniting ideas also exist in many other unique and recognizable play spaces around the globe.

The examples all exemplify how playgrounds do have the ability to become more than simply bright equipment laid out on a bed of asphalt. Playspaces of today have the potential to embody unique characteristics that reflect a clear idea of concept and strong knowledge of its users. Takano Hillside Park, the St. Louis City Museum, and Belleville Park Playground are but three working grounds for play that have clearly benefited from adding innovation back into the playground. New Bremen's proposed playspace design draws from such examples in creating an imaginative place of its own.

Figure 5.7: Kensth of Passage, Dresden

Figure 5.8: Blanton Museum of Art


istockphoto.com

THE CONCEPTS

06

6.1 PROGRAMMATIC CONCEPT 1

MERGING SPACES FOR SPECTATORS WITH SPACES FOR PLAY
+
A CHILD'S UNDERSTANDING OF CHAOS AND ORDER

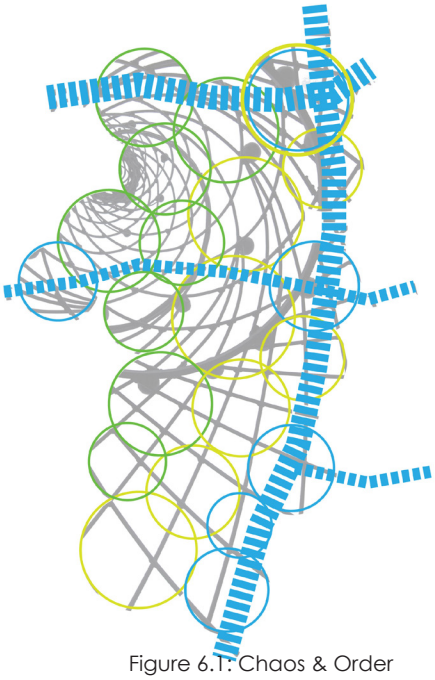


Figure 6.1: Chaos & Order

elements of intrigue.
declare site character.
establish point of entry.
draw users to space.

shared space.
bridge boundary between observer & player.
promotes continuous use.

specified space.
accomodates for more directed types of play.
focuses on specific developmental skill.

"We don't stop playing because we grow old.
We grow old because we stop playing."

Though this new play space specifically caters to children, it was important to recognize that more than just these children would be enjoying the park. In order to promote active use during school hours, for example, flexible spaces needed to be incorporated so that adults, too, would be provided with a place to enjoy. This concept blurred the line between spaces where adults, whom bring the children to park, observe, and children play (Figure 6.2). And added to this idea was the contrasting pull between chaos and order (Figure 6.1), representative of children deciphering their world for the first time.

Figure 6.2: Character of Spectator & Play Space Across Site

6.2 PROGRAMMATIC CONCEPT 2

INTEGRATING NATURAL, ADVENTURE & TRADITIONAL PLAY
+
A CHILD'S EXPLORATION OF MATERIAL & COLOR

traditional.

level or low grade ground plan.
brightly colored equipment.
familiar play materials.

adventure.

highest contrast in topography.
new materials and forms.
manipulation of loose parts.

natural.

utilizes existing vegetated areas.
pure colors; earth tones.
exploration of natural world.

"Children have learned from infanthood that bright colours are associated [with play]...**it is not an issue of what colour but of strong color contrasts."** (hendricks 45).

The site's topography was utilized to locate which parts of the site best catered to the different playground types. It is important that aspects from all playground typologies are included in the overall design because each is beneficial to specific aspects of a child's development. In areas where natural, adventure, and traditional play begin to overlap, it will be crucial that the designer play attention to how spaces transition, specifically in terms of material, unity and scale.

Figure 6.3: Play Typology Across Site

6.3 COLLECTIVE CONCEPT A

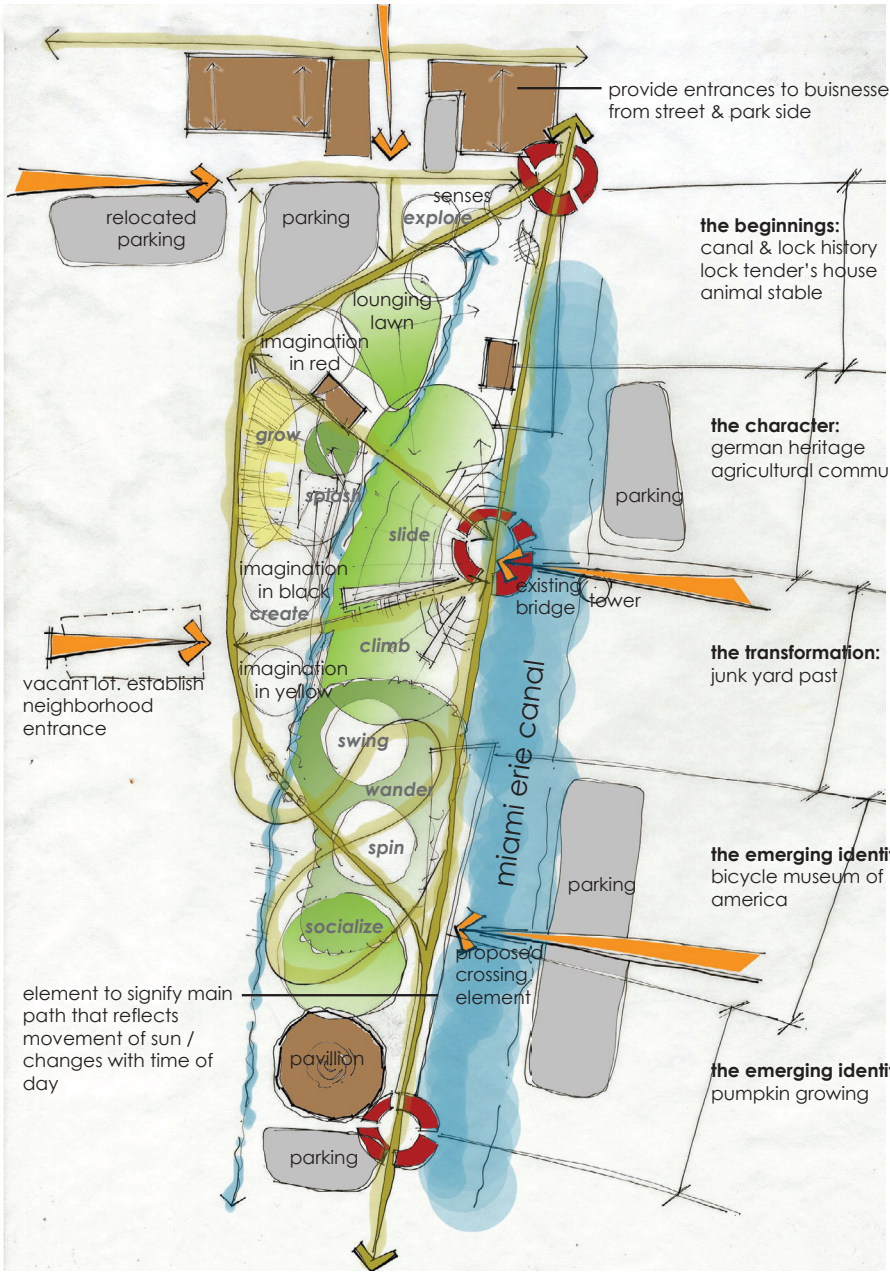


Figure 6.4: Concept A

6.3 COLLECTIVE CONCEPT B

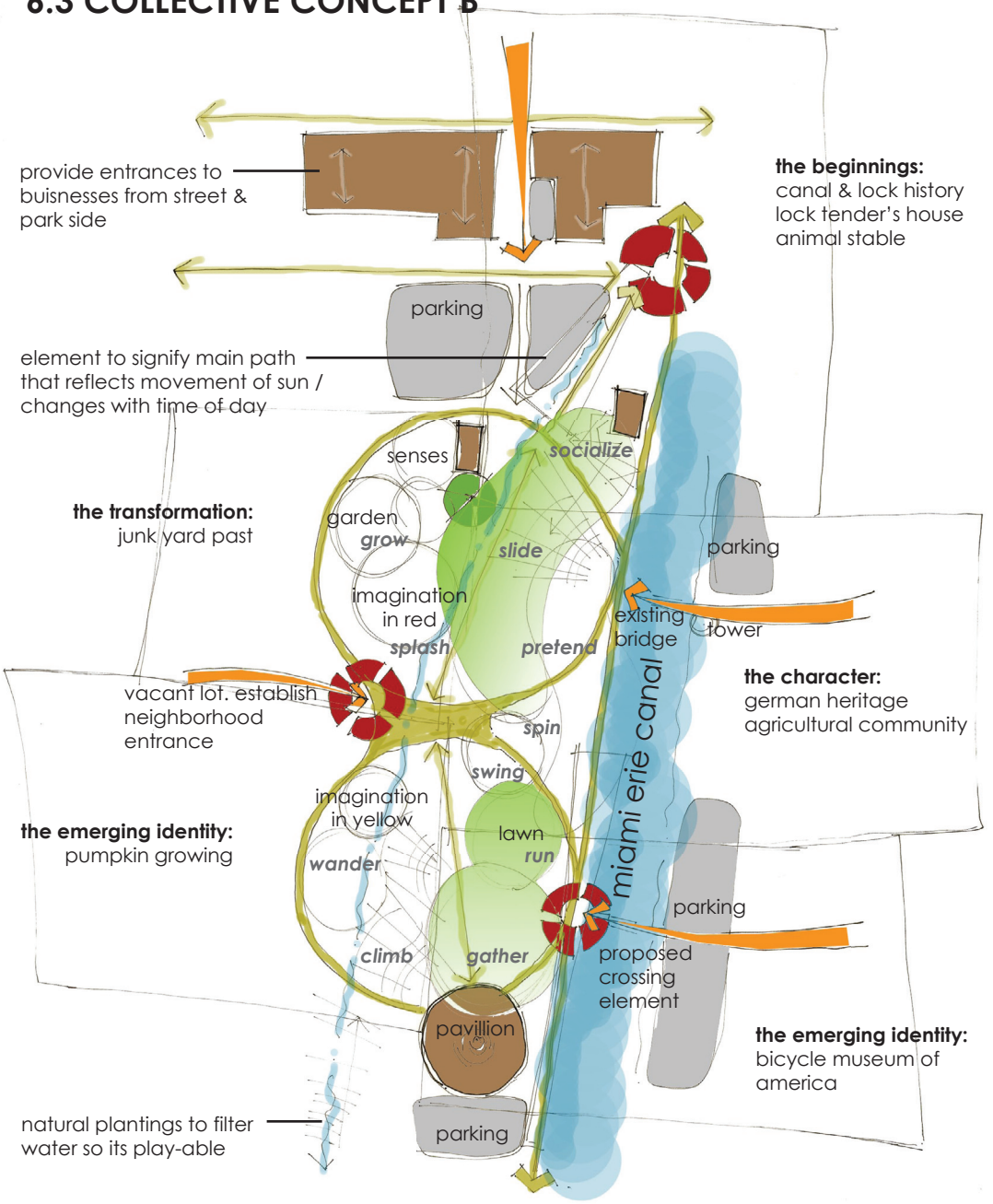


Figure 6.5: Concept B

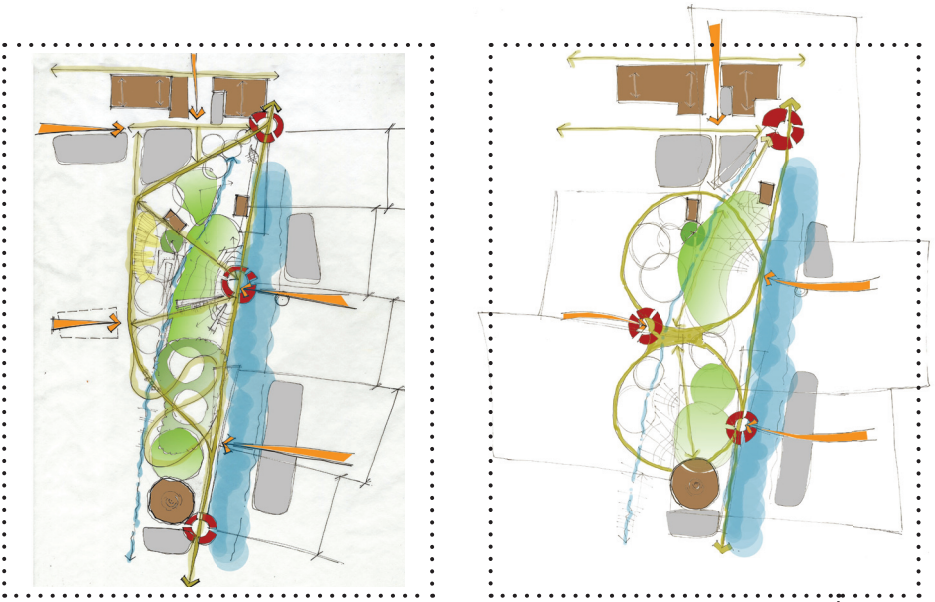
CONCEPT EVALUATION

CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

The two programmatic concepts were developed by combining the site analysis with goal one (Figure 6.2) and the site analysis with goal two (Figure 6.3). Concepts A and B then each derived by combining these two programmatic concepts with remaining goals three and four (page 27). These two more concrete and developed concept plans each accomplish the same objectives, but do so by different means. So in order to then develop a master plan that reflects the best solution for the given space, the most successful aspects of each concept needed to be combined into one comprehensive design.

CONCEPT COMPARISON MATRIX

The matrix at right (Figure 6.6) shows how each individual concept was evaluated based on the listed goals and design objectives. Though concept A, for example, effectively directed people through the site, the character of this pedestrian circulation was lacking. In concept B, though the form of the pedestrian paths was improved, it lacked a connection to the business corridor because the existing parking lot was left unchanged. All aspects that most strongly fulfilled the given principles (represented in green) were thus combined to create a successful master plan (Figure 7.1) that knowingly exceled in each listed area.



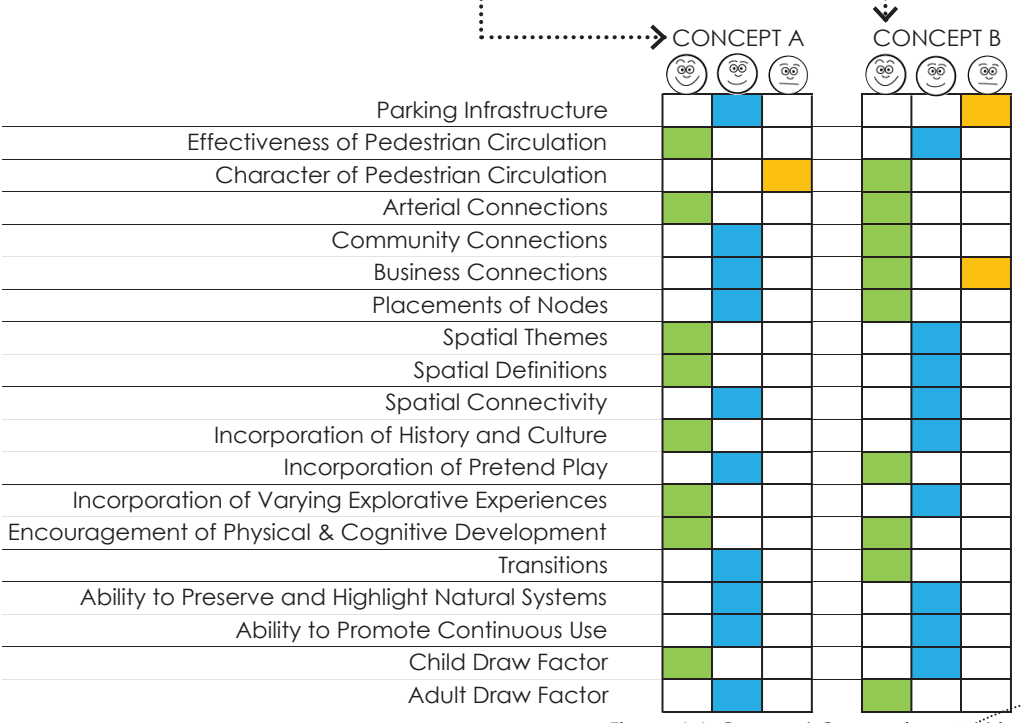


Figure 6.6: Concept Comparison Matrix

PLAYBORHOOD:

verb. [pley-ber-hood].

merges spectator and play space; integrates natural, adventure and traditional play; incorporates culture and character into place; accommodates for today's children.

THE DESIGN

7.1 MASTER PLAN

Figure 7.1: Contextual Master Plan

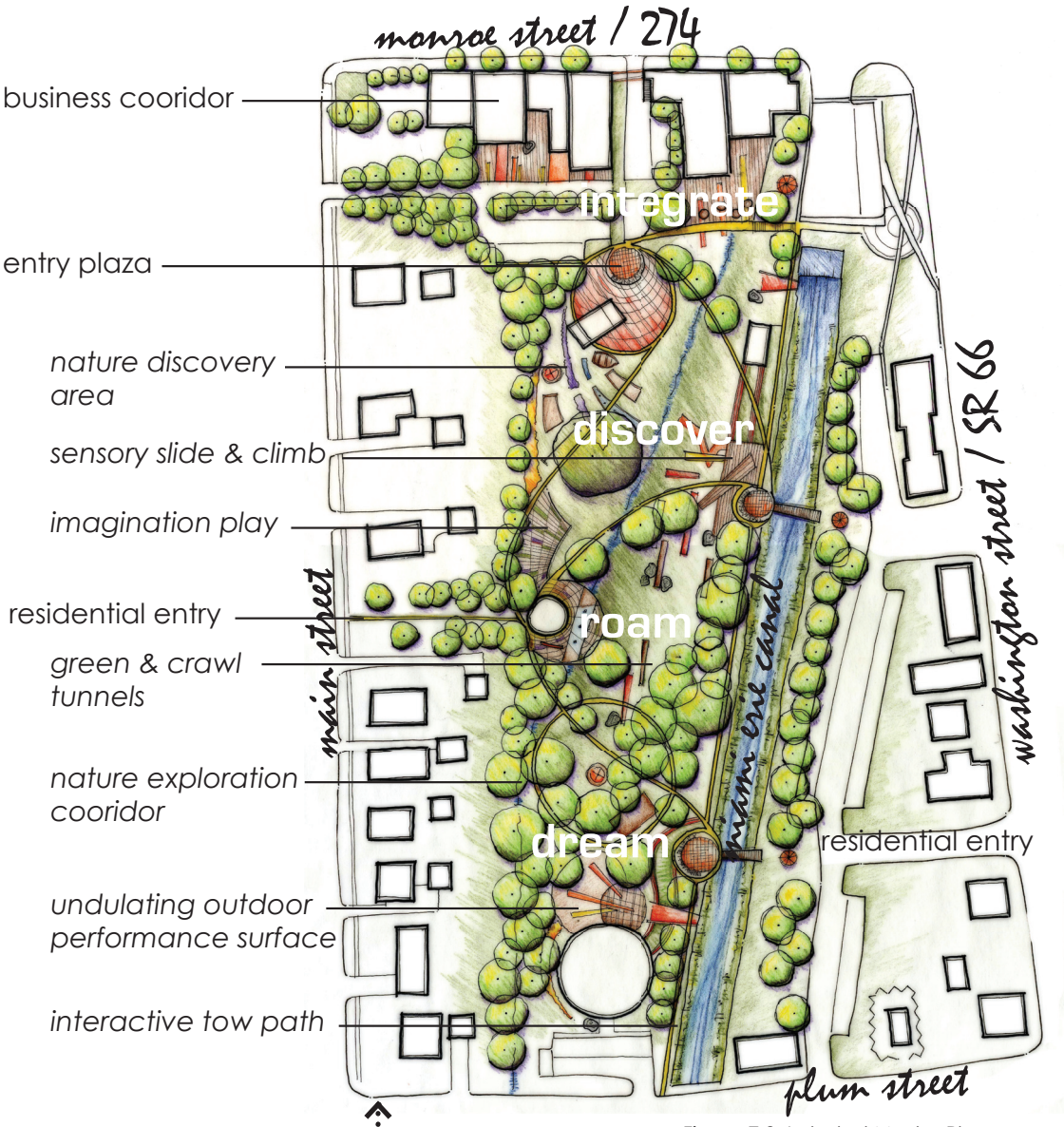


Figure 7.2: Labeled Master Plan

EXPERIENCE OUTDOORS IN HD

7.2 SYSTEMS DIAGRAMS

APPLAUD
sit | observe

PERFORM
dance | act

CREATE
build | change

IMAGINE
role-play | story-tell

Figure 7.3: Pretend Play Diagram

CLIMB

SLIDE

SWING

RUN

Figure 7.4: Play Activities Diagram

PRETEND PLAY

Across the entirety of the site, pretend play is accommodated for in various ways (Figure 7.3). Pretend play occupies a large majority of a child's day and is highly associated with today's popular theory explaining why kids engage in play. This theory hypothesizes that children play to prepare for adulthood. They act out scenes of bravery or heroism and take on roles as doctors or firefighters to experience real adult circumstances. In other words, they pretend. Therefore, weaved into the site can be found intriguing spaces for applauding, performing, creating, and imagining, the basic actions associated with places for pretend. Children can engage in everything from performing on a stage-like setting to building secret forts in the wild nature area.

PLAY ACTIVITIES

The traditional play activities of climbing, sliding, swinging and running have been proven to not only be desired events in the play space, but also highly beneficial to a child's motor development. Therefore, such basic actions have been provided for throughout the length of the site (Figure 7.4). This diagram exemplifies that despite the introduction of new materials and play experiences, the traditional idea of a playground is still prevalent in its function.

7.3 BIG IDEAS

The site's big ideas can be represented on two scales. Unifying the whole playspace together is the idea of scale (Figure 7.6) and rope (Figure 7.5). Rope is used literally for different interactive play elements across the site and figuratively in the development of an enhanced pedestrian circulation system, seen at right. Furthermore, the site is divided into four zones that also have a specified focus (Figure 7.7).

Figure 7.5: Rope Inspired Circulation

ROPE

Figure 7.6: Vegetation & Scale

SCALE

Figure 7.7: Zoned Themes

ZONED THEMES

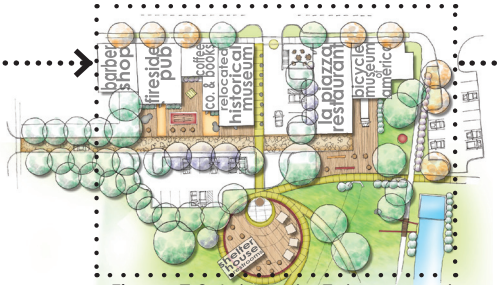


Figure 7.8: Integrate Enlargement

INTEGRATE The northern portion of the site eliminates the previous divide between green space and commercial core. It seamlessly blurs the line between where play supposedly stops and business begins.

Figure 7.9: Discover Enlargement

DISCOVER This area of the site focuses on exploration and discovery. It creates a unique play experience that constantly changes with time, season, and user visitation. A particular focus is placed on introducing new materials and the experience that occurs from one element to the next.

Figure 7.10: Roam Enlargement

ROAM The third section centers around the idea of wandering or roaming. It includes a sloping green and various elements strategically placed to encourage visitors to abandon the path and run, skip, and roll as they move through the site at their own pace.

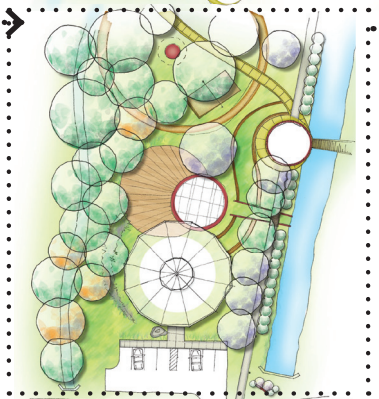


Figure 7.11: Dream Enlargement

DREAM The southernmost portion of the site revolves around dreaming. Here, children and adults alike have freedom to be the creators of their own play world. Undulating ground planes and wild natural areas are abundant and non-descript play elements have the capability of becoming whatever one can imagine.

7.4 INTEGRATE ENLARGEMENT

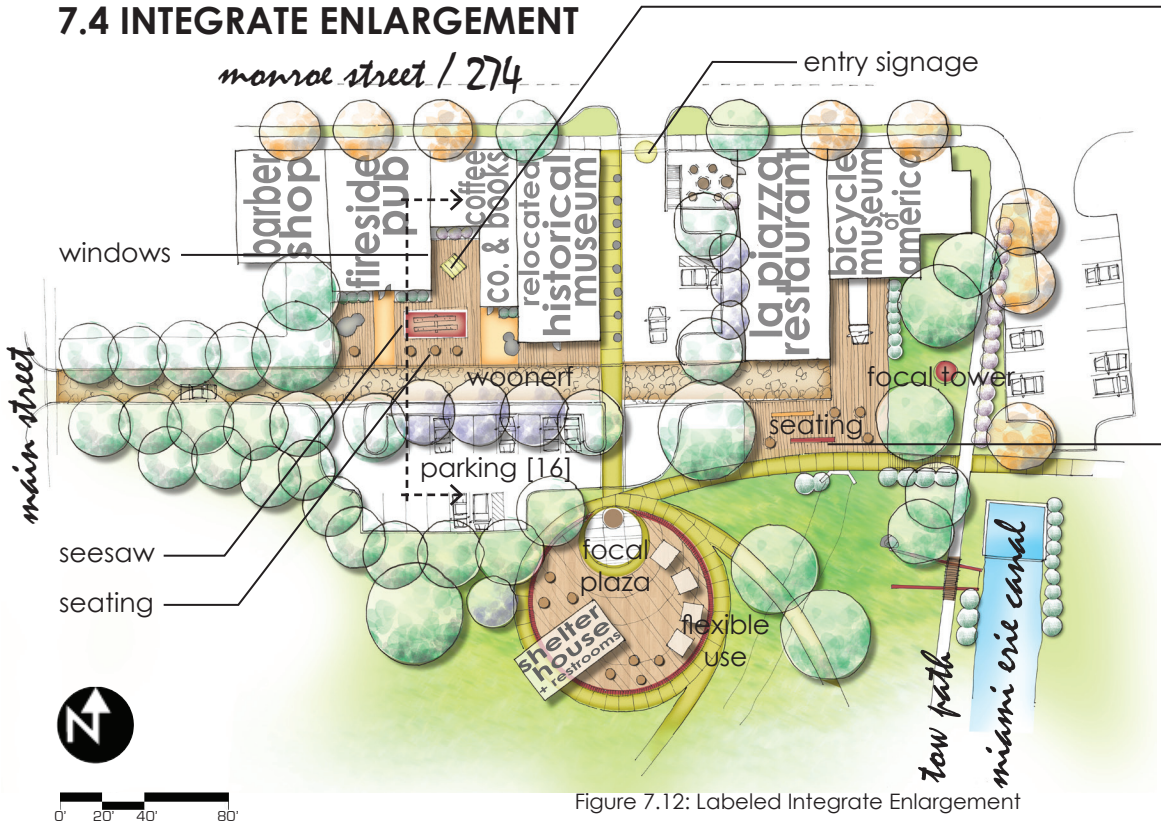


Figure 7.12: Labeled Integrate Enlargement

BUILDING PARK RELATION The above blow up plan (Figure 7.12) details how the business core is now fully integrated with the adjacent park and playspace. Commercial buildings once turned their backs to the green space but now offer access from their southern front along with the main Monroe Street entrance. This improves park visitation and the user's sense of safety. It also benefits the individual business entities as people coming for the playspace are more likely to make their way into park front stores.

PEDESTRIAN FOCUS The previously underused sea of asphalt parking now favors the pedestrian instead of the vehicle. Woonerfs replace drives and various pocket plazas create spaces for friends of all ages to meet, socialize, and play (Figure 7.13). Seesaws intermix with seating elements and an interactive rope installation (Figure 7.14) activates an abandoned dead end.

Figure 7.14: Rope Installation

Figure 7.15: X-Wave

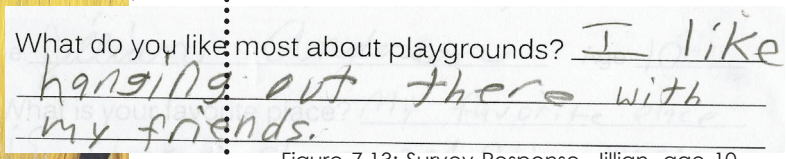


Figure 7.13: Survey Response, Jillian, age 10

HUMAN SCALE

The section below (Figure 7.16) demonstrates how elements such as signage, installations, umbrellas, and vegetation are all used to reduce the space down to human scale. Items and features also have dual purposes as they provide for play and intrigue as well as fulfill basic design principles such as defining space, softening edges, or creating viewsheds. The playborhood tower, for example, is used as a draw factor and terminus for the given space.

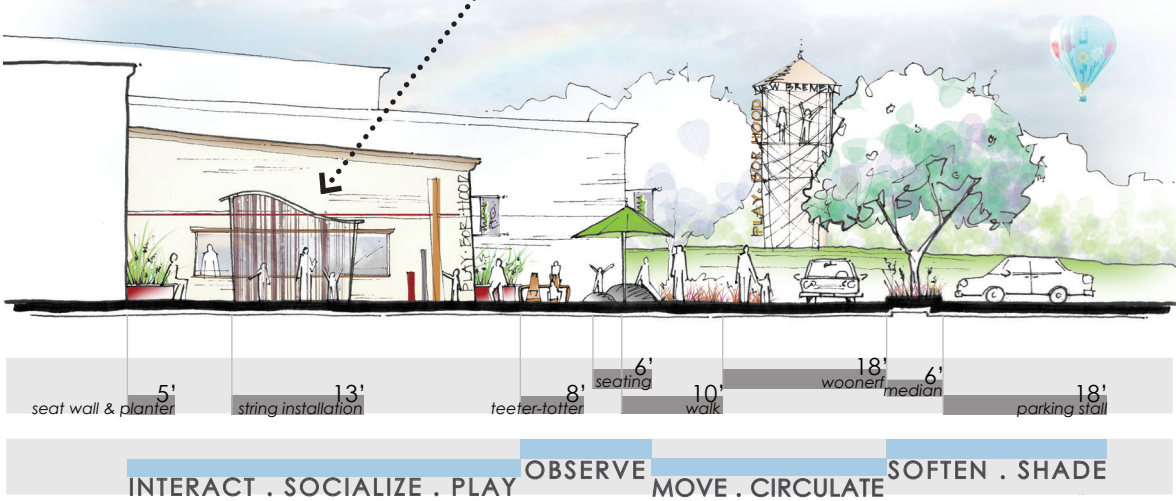


Figure 7.16: Businesses Meet Park Space Section

7.5 DISCOVER ENLARGEMENT

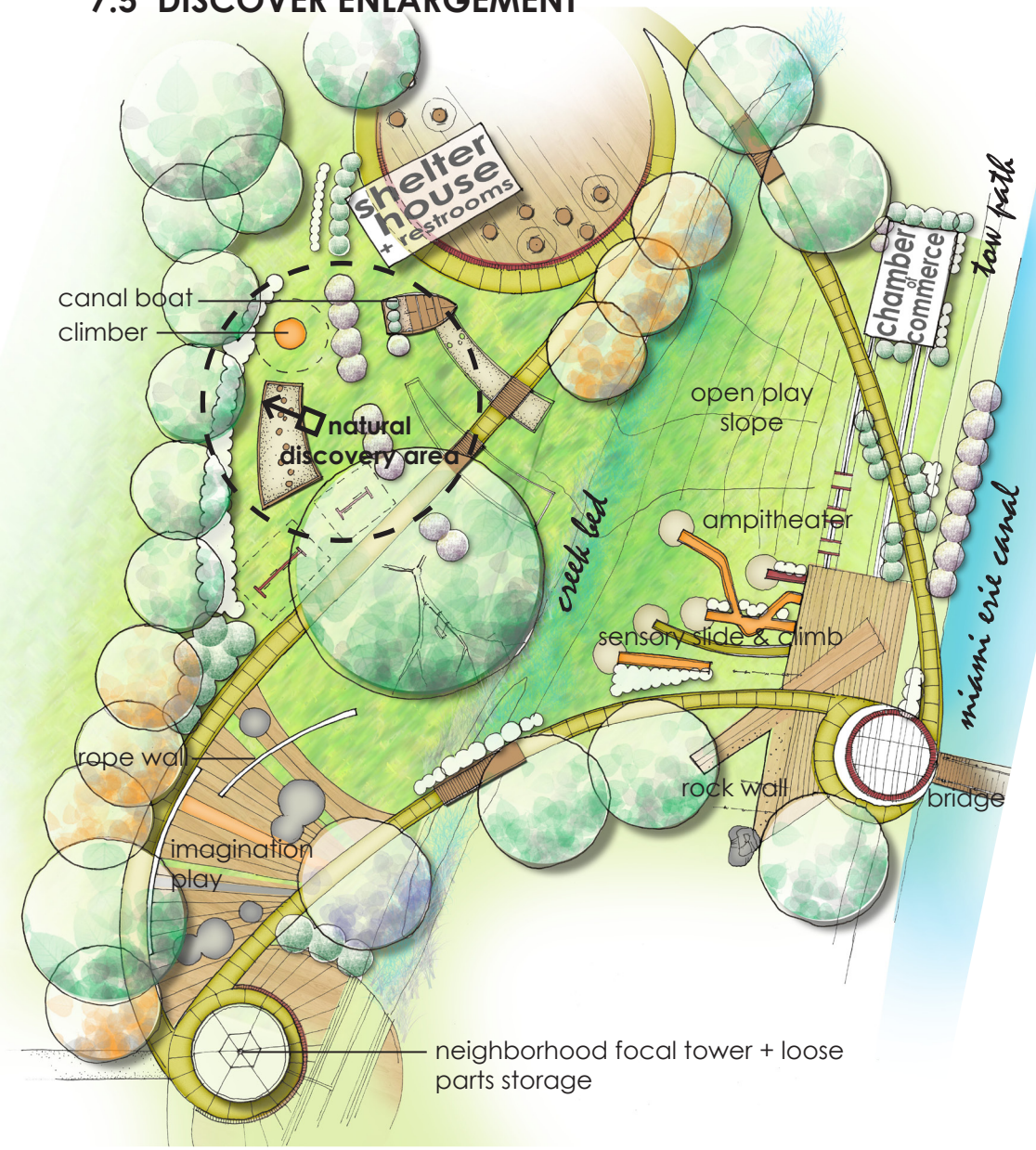


Figure 7.17: Labeled Discover Enlargement

[A] NATURAL DISCOVERY AREA

Figure 7.18: Natural Discovery Area Perspective

The enlargement at left (Figure 7.17) focuses on the idea of discovery. Seeing as children are experiencing their world for the first time, it is here where they are offered a multitude of different materials, textures and colors to explore. The natural discovery area, imagination play space, and sensory slide and climb are the three main areas in which active discovery is readily provided for.

Additionally, young kids spend much of their time moving from one play element to the next. Vegetation was therefore used to enhance this journey between play pieces. Plant material allows a child to develop their sense of space, distance and size through their senses, and it also offers them new scents and blooms to interact with and **discover** with each passing season (Figure 7.18).

[B] PLANTING PLAN

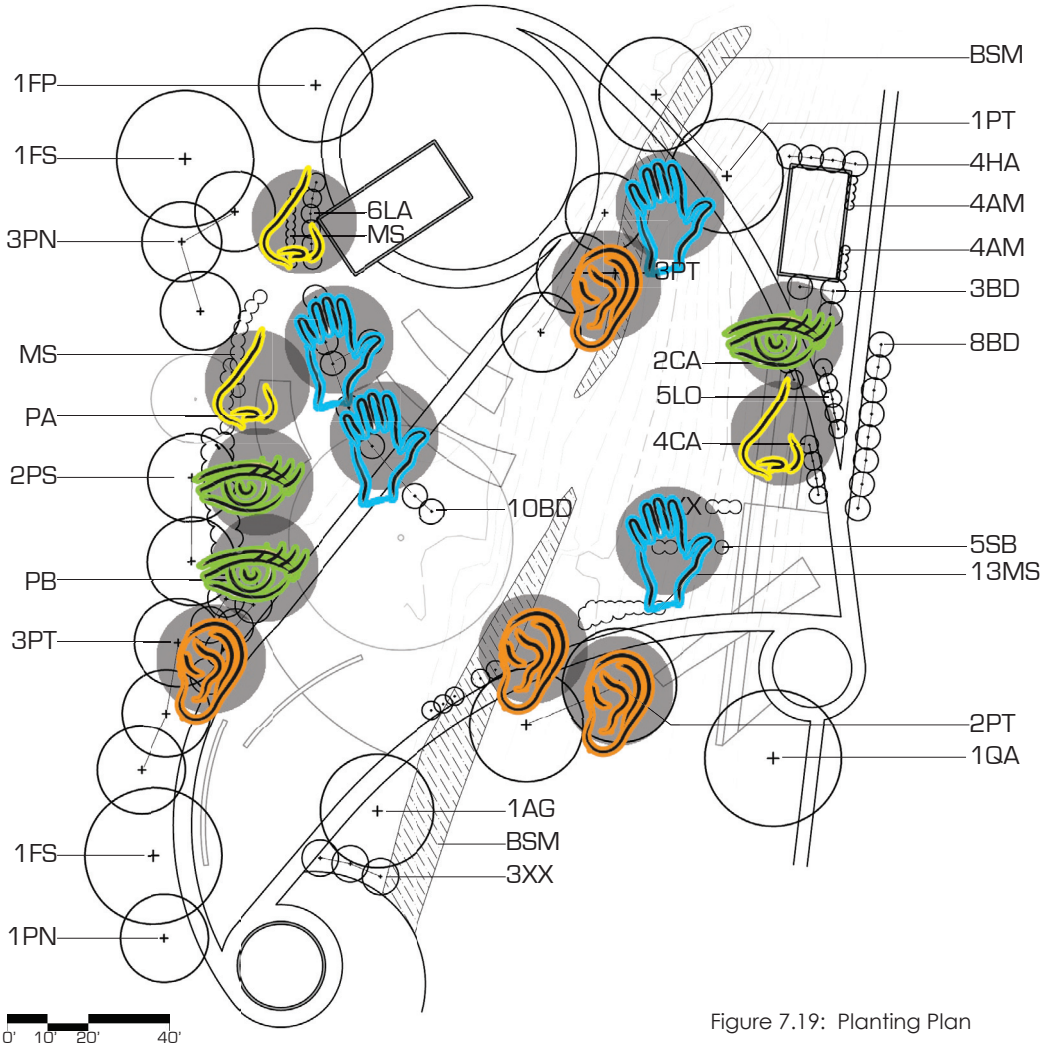


Figure 7.19: Planting Plan

Research supports that children are not content to simply view their world from afar. They want touch, smell, interact with and explore their environment firsthand. And in the first six years of life, kids primarily learn about the world through the physical senses (Hendricks 68). Children are experiencing everything for the first time, and thus have a heightened sense of awareness that has often long since faded in adults. It is difficult to

Figure 7.20: Plant Sensory Chart

cater to each of these senses, however, simply through play components. New Bremen's play space therefore utilizes plant material to encourage a child's comprehensive understanding of their world. Each plant selected is non-poisonous, thorn-free and, most importantly, caters to a specific sense that ultimately allows the child to flirt with the real world and discover its naturally playful qualities. This is exemplified in Figures 7.19 and 7.20.

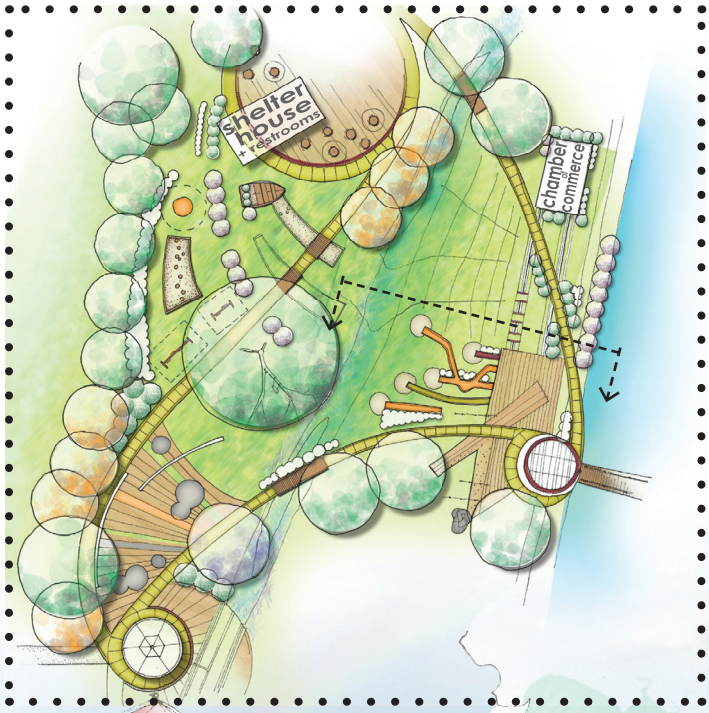
[C] IMAGINATION PLAY

The imagination play space is located closest to the residential community because these children will use the park the most and will have the highest potential to become bored with the space. The loose parts shown here, however, eliminate boredom and will allow for an ever evolving and personalized playspace. Such adventure play encourages cooperation and involves children of all ages.

Figure 7.21: Survey Response, Rachel, Fourth Grade

Figure 7.22: Imagination Play Perspective

[D] TOPOGRAPHICAL CHALLENGE



OBSERVE | ORIENT

canal

play tower

ampitheater

0' 5' 10' 20'

10'
canal overlook

60'
tow path

30'
central play platform

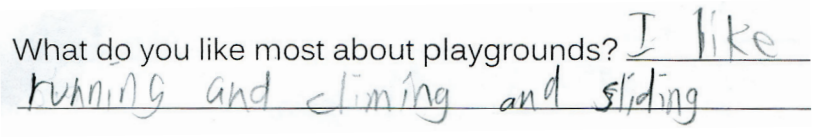


Figure 7.23: Survey Response, Nicholas, age 10

PLAYING WITH TOPOGRAPHY

Where a traditional playground would see the given slope as problematic, this playspace proves that grade change in a play environment can be utilized. Topography alone allows each playspace to be unique. Figure 7.24 highlights how the depicted playborhood uses slope for sliding and climbing. Sliders interact with plant textures on the way down and scale the slope and climbing wall on the way up.

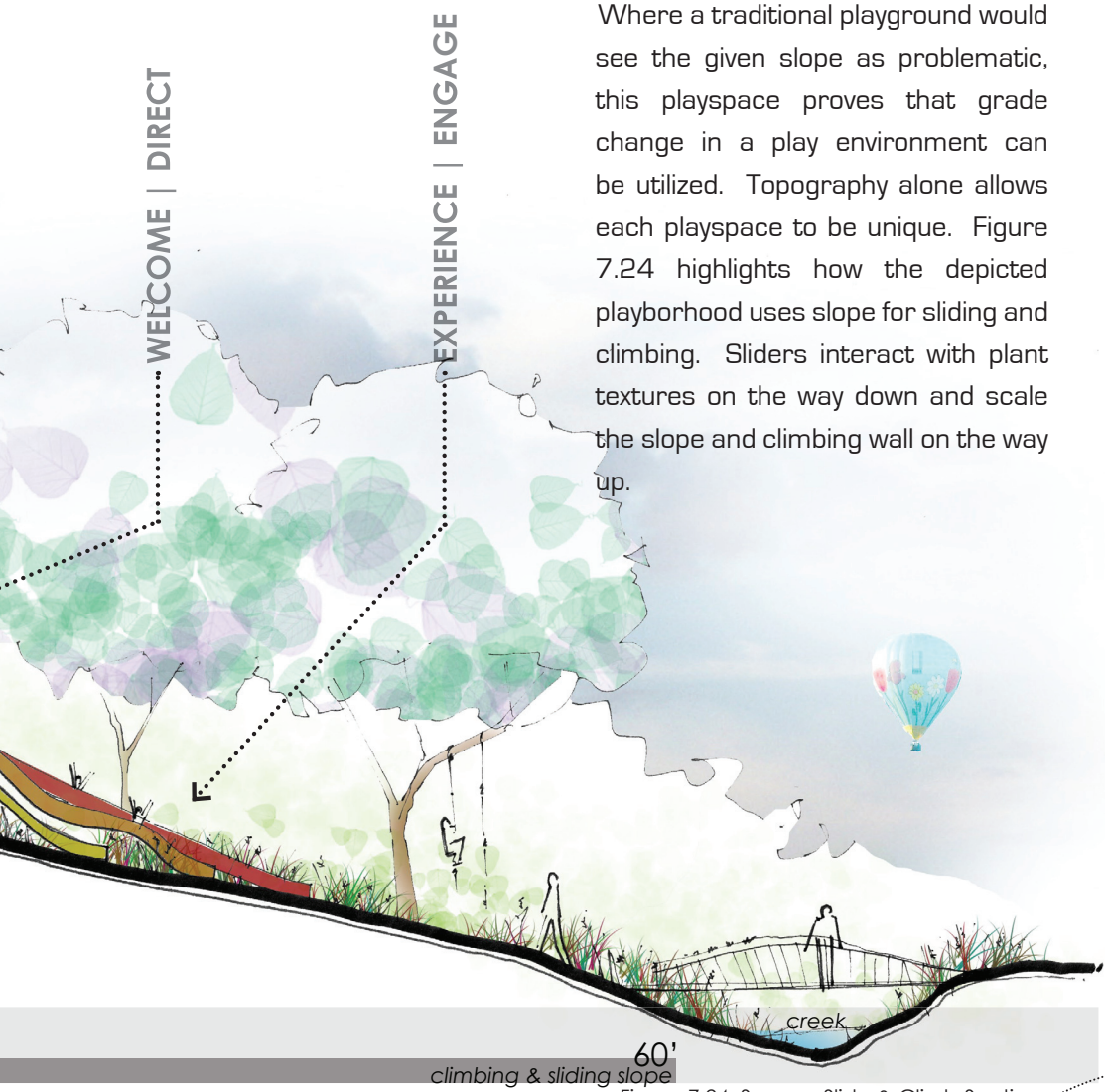


Figure 7.24: Sensory Slide & Climb Section

7.6 ROAM ENLARGEMENT

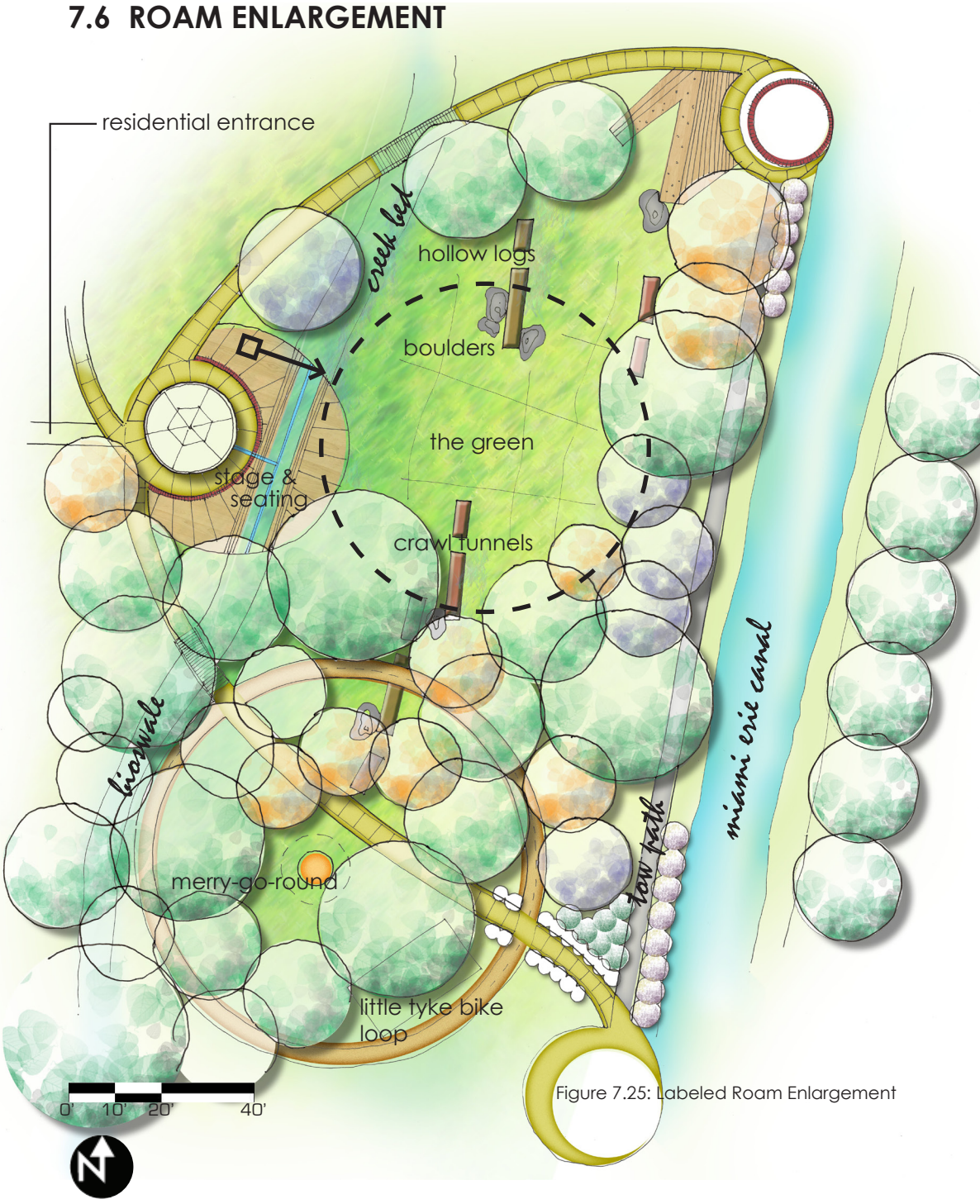


Figure 7.25: Labeled Roam Enlargement

[A] THE GREEN

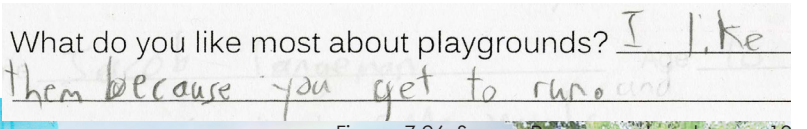


Figure 7.26: Survey Response, Jacob, age 10

Figure 7.27: The Green Perspective

The green transitions the park space from programmed play, to the north, to nature exploration areas, to the south. The open space gives way to running and active play as it encourages the player to abandon the path and wander. This space most readily demonstrates how the park promotes continuous use. During school hours, when kids are absent, employees can use the playborhood and its elements for picnic and seating space.

7.7 DREAM ENLARGEMENT

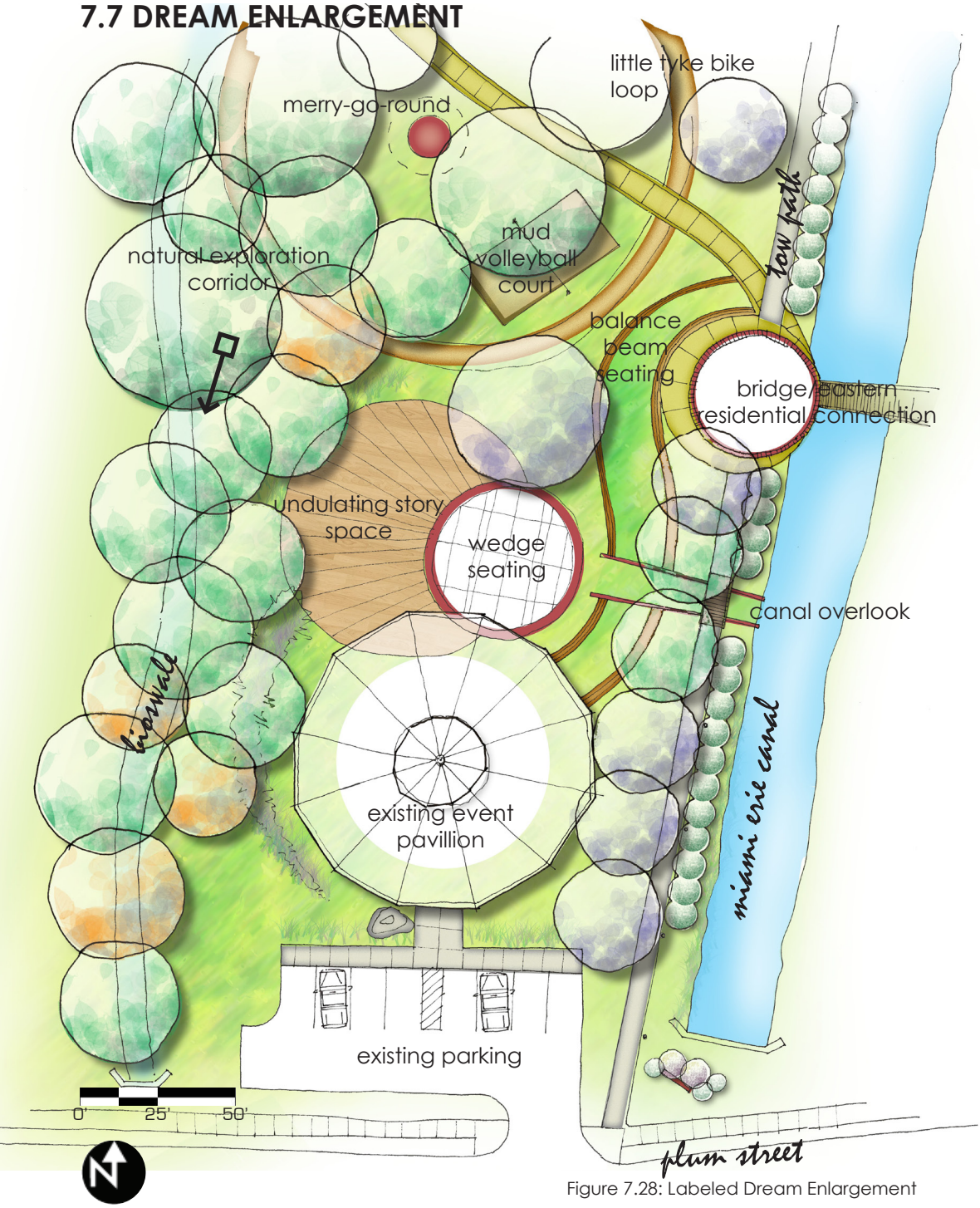


Figure 7.28: Labeled Dream Enlargement

[A] NATURAL EXPLORATION CORRIDOR

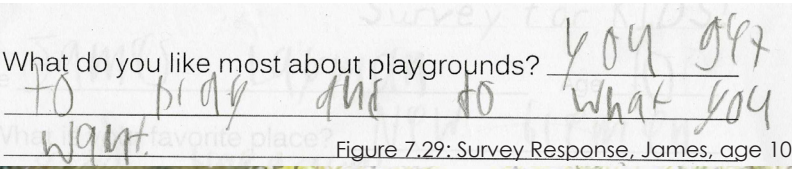


Figure 7.29: Survey Response, James, age 10

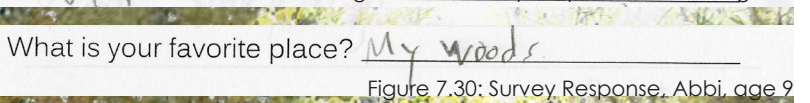
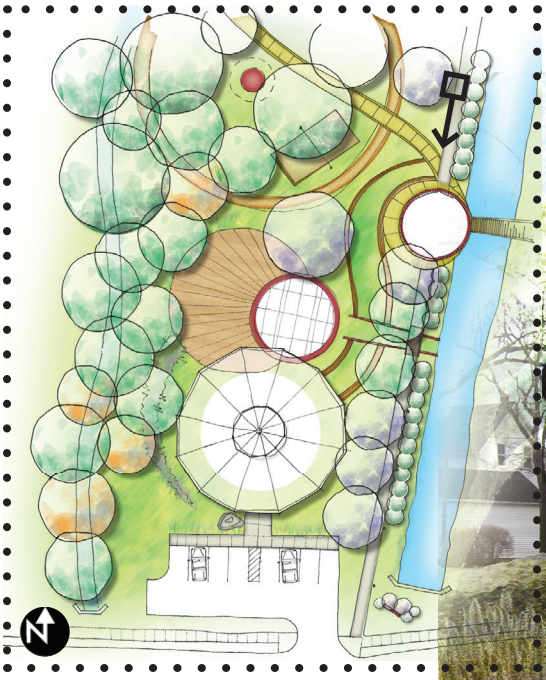


Figure 7.30: Survey Response, Abbi, age 9

Figure 7.31: Natural Exploration Corridor Perspective

Generations prior children had plenty of pure nature in which they could explore and play on their own. Here, such a natural corridor is once again added back to the world of play. Natural play produces a greater increase in children's balance, coordination, creativity, and fitness. And not only is adding nature back to the playspace economically smart, but it also brings back the healthy challenge and element of risk which is critical to all human development.

[B] ENTRANCE & TOW PATH CHARACTER

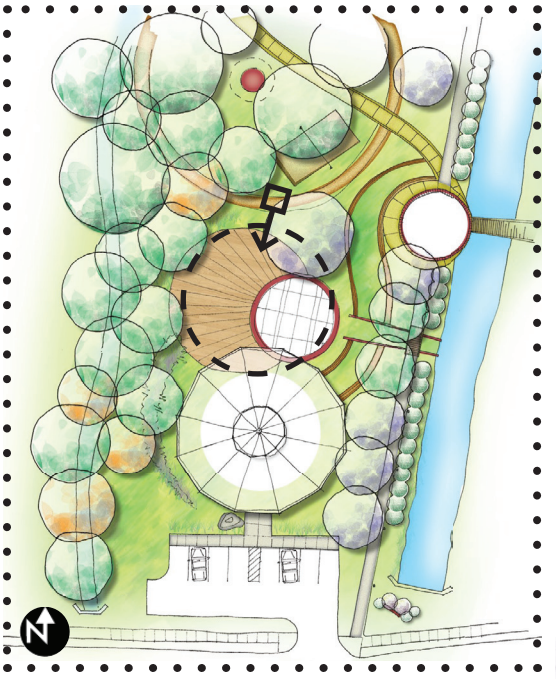


ENTRANCES Enhanced entrances establish place and declare site identity. Play towers reflect the architectural character of the adjacent downtown core and sit at the heart of established viewsheds to draw people into the space. For bicyclists and pedestrians traveling on the tow path, the entrances furthermore celebrate that a destination has been reached.

Figure 7.32: Playborhood Entrance & Tow Path

TOW PATH CHARACTER The main tow path encourages the user to wander and discover rather than to simply pass through by using shadow and lighting elements, as seen above, The vertical structures provide for repetition and movement (signifying that the space is a main thoroughfare), yet slow down the speed of the traveler because if its interactive ground plan patterns that constantly change with the sun.

[C] UNDULATING STORY SPACE



The space, shown at right, accommodates for pretend play by creating an undulating stage and seating type setting that also allows for sliding and climbing. Through a child's imagination the space can transform into an alien planet, for example (Figure 7.33). The depicted story space also ties the existing event pavilion into the greater park and can be used for celebrations during all seasons and times of day (Figures 7.34 & 7.35).

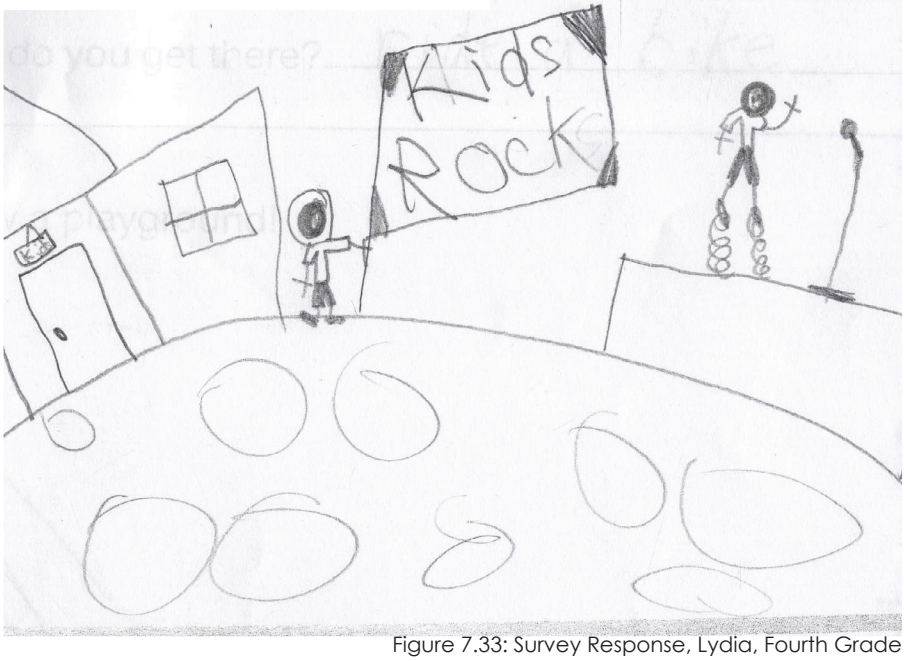


Figure 7.33: Survey Response, Lydia, Fourth Grade

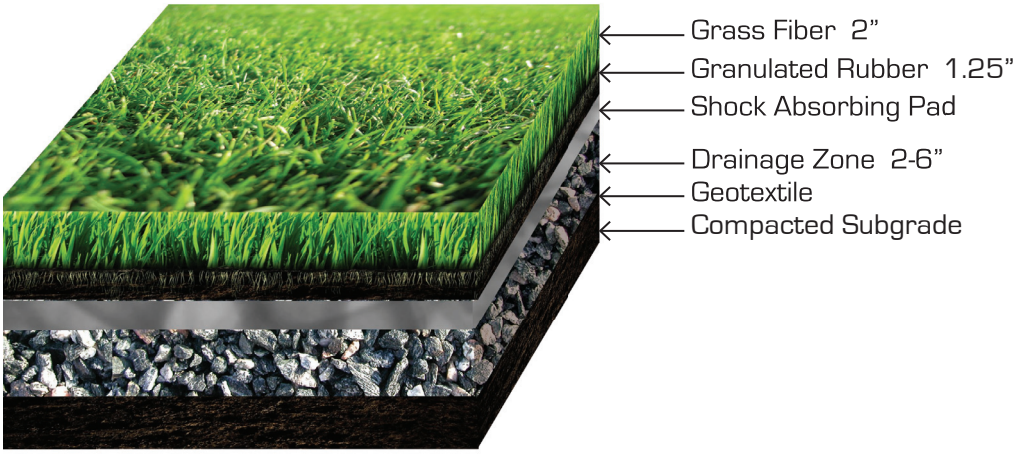
Figure 7.34: Undulating Story Space [snow]

Figure 7.35: Undulating Story Space [night]

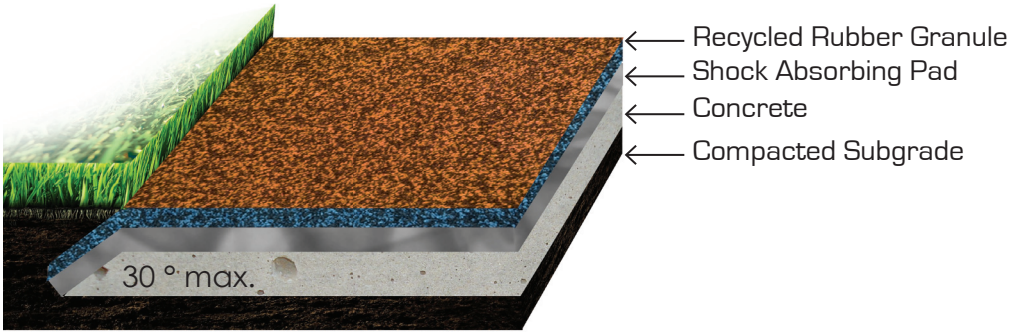
7.8 SURFACING DETAILS

What do you like least about playgrounds? I dislike the match because I like taking of my shoes and it hurts.

Figure 7.36: Survey Response, Hannah, age 9

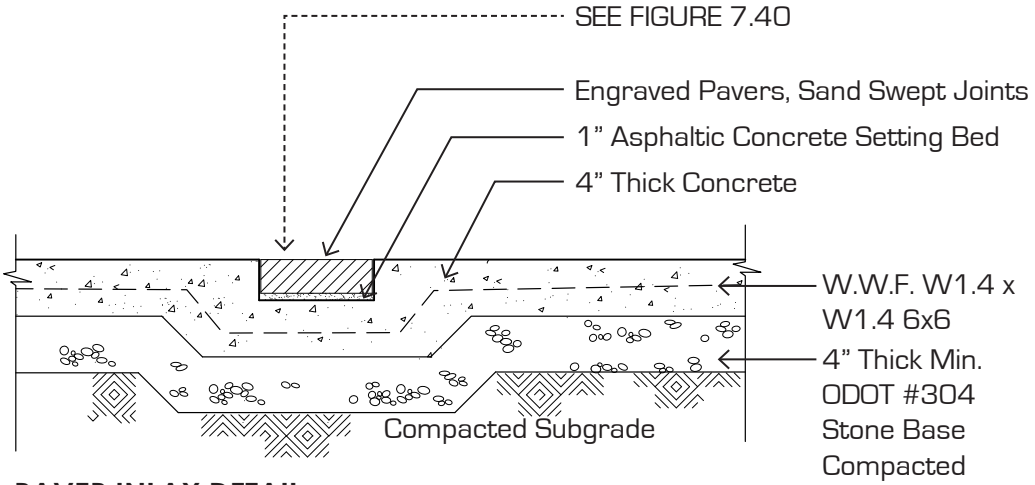


GRASS ACCESS MATS
Figure 7.37: Grass Access Mat Detail



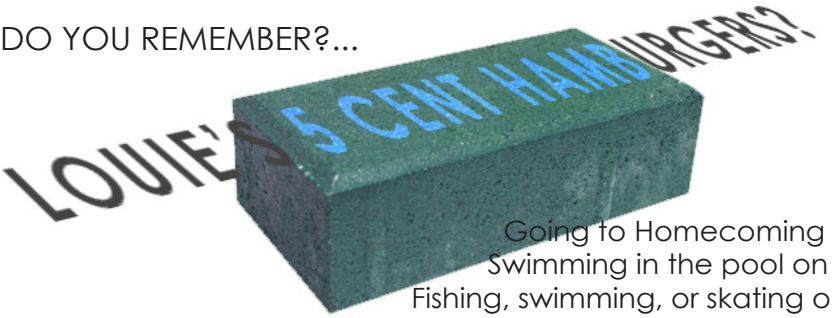
RECYCLED RUBBER FLOOR
Figure 7.38: Recycled Rubber Floor Detail

In order to produce a playspace that is visually integrated with its surroundings, edging is eliminated from the entirety of the site. High attention was paid to ensuring that surface textures allowed for barefeet. The above surfacing products (Figures 7.37 & 7.38) comply these ideas as well as the standard requirements for access, safety and maintainability.



PAVER INLAY DETAIL
Figure 7.39: Paver Inlay Detail

DO YOU REMEMBER?...



Going to Homecoming at J.C. Park?
Swimming in the pool on Plum Street?
Fishing, swimming, or skating on the canal?
"Hand-packed" ice cream from Speckman's Equity Store on Main?
Reading the Fire Department blackboard to find out where the fire was?

PAVER ENGRAVING DETAIL
Figure 7.40: Paver Engraving Detail

Resting at the center of the Little Tyke Bike Loop lie engraved pavers that reminisce on New Bremen's life in years past and celebrate its identity. Visitors of all ages will enjoy following this trail and learning of, or rediscovering, the town's past. Questions prompt imagination in children and promote family centered play.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CONCLUSION

This comprehensive project effectively addressed a pertinent issue in the field of landscape architecture today. It took a fully researched problem through the design process and ultimately created a successful solution that responded to both children and the specified site in New Bremen, Ohio.

A playground was previously defined as "an area used for outdoor play, often containing equipment such as slides and swings." This project proved that a space for play can, and should, go far beyond what this static term implies. By adding the element of creativity and fun back to the playground, a more adequately named "playborhood" was able to be created which not only accommodated for children and their needs and desires, but also provided for the community by enhancing identity and ensuring that local businesses remain at the heart of the village's rich downtown.

The entire site truly represents a sound knowledge of children. Each element and piece of the overall design responds to basic design principles and, more importantly, either caters to a child's cognitive or physical development, or supports the popular theory that pretend play is highly beneficial in one's life.

This project should undoubtedly serve as a precedent for future playspace designs. Taking advantage of the positive aspects that coincide with traditional, natural and adventure playgrounds and having a sound understanding of your primary clientele alone will allow for numerous missed opportunities to become utilized. This comprehensive project proved such a point and furthermore exemplified how transforming spaces for play into a playborhood-type park that goes beyond the worn out image today's playground will produce measurable benefits for everyone involved.

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THE APPENDICES

09

[A] Research Methodology

[B] Timelind

[C] List Of Figures

[D] Bibliography

APPENDIX [A]: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology functioned as a plan for addressing the design problem at hand. It outlined the means by which issues were both investigated and researched. More specifically, the methodology was used to adequately research case studies that have surpassed the traditional playground, explore benefits and constraints of natural, equipment-based, and adventure play, delve into the psychology of play, bring to light the specifics of a park's economic impact, and lastly, discover historical influences pertinent to the given site in New Bremen, Ohio. To adequately address each subproblem, both primary and secondary data was obtained through historical and descriptive research methods.

To discover the means by which play spaces have broken the stereotypical playground mold of today and furthermore, to evaluate their success, case studies were used. Thus, secondary data was the main research method employed for this topic. Projects such as the Children's Playground at Takano Hillside Park, the St. Louis City Museum, and Belleville Park Playground were all be investigated in depth. To obtain information on these precedent studies, the designers' websites, as well as supplemental articles on the specific projects, were utilized. All such data and imagery was found online. In addition, the book by George Hall and Liane Lefaivre entitled "Ground-Up City: Play as a Design Tool" was reviewed, as it provides ample imagery of many unique play spaces found around the globe. This work was checked out from Ball State University's Architecture Library.

To compare the benefits and constraints that coincide with natural and equipment-based play, both primary and secondary data were used. Qualitative primary data was gathered in the form of surveys. Open ended questionnaires asked New Bremen fourth grade students to share what they both liked and disliked about the playgrounds offered to them. Both quantitative and qualitative secondary data was gathered in the form

of articles and books. Ingunn Fjørtoft's article entitled "Landscape as Playscape: The Effects of Natural Environments on Children's Play and Motor Development" and Anita Bundy's article entitled "The Risk is That There is 'No Risk': A Simple, Innovative Intervention to Increase Children's Activity Levels" were both obtained through Ball State University's online article and journal database. Linda Baker's article entitled "The Politics of Play" and Deborah Bishop's work entitled "Structured Play" were scanned in from Metropolis and Dwell magazines, respectively. Barbara E. Hendricks' book entitled "Designing for Play" was utilized as well for this sub-problem. This work was be checked out from Ball State University's Architecture Library.

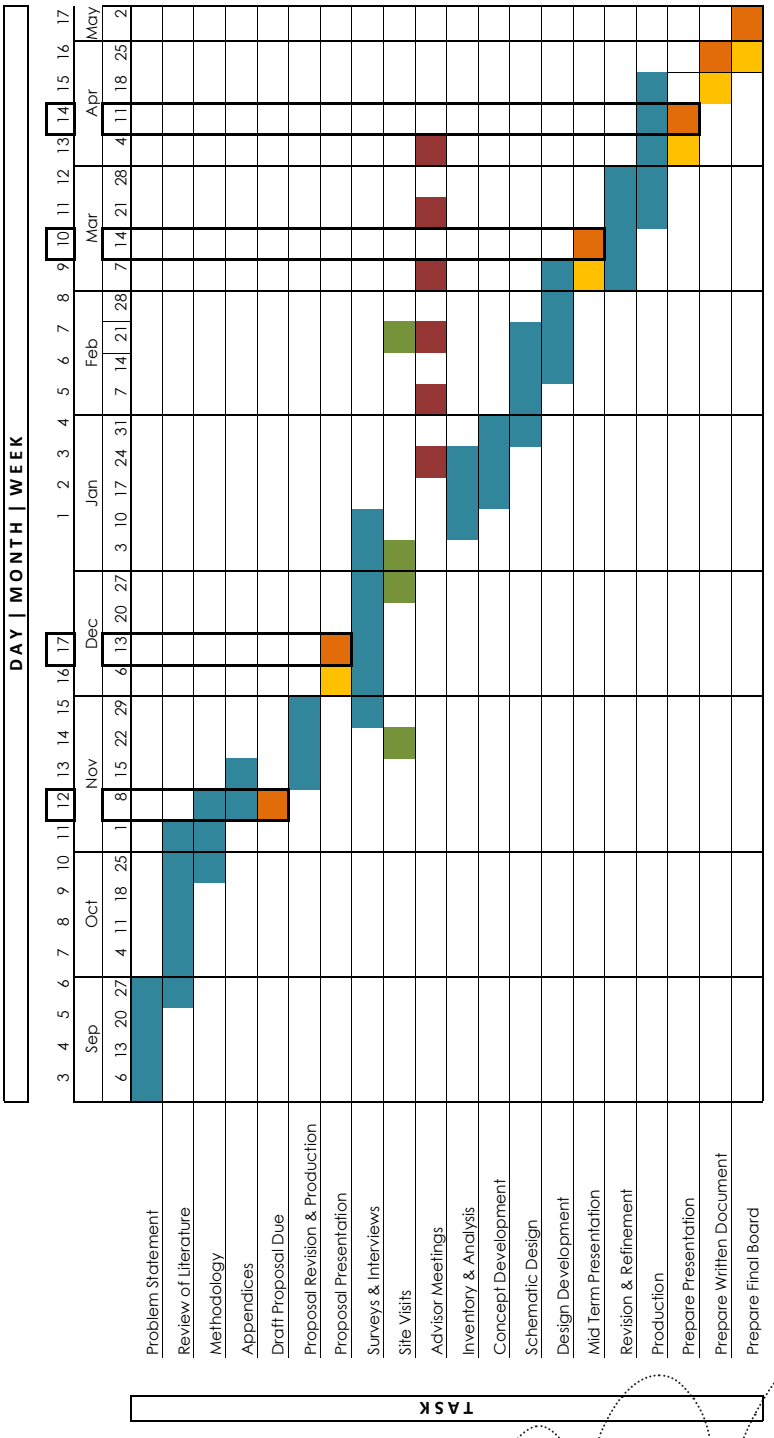
To fully understand the psychology of how children play, primarily secondary sources were used. The studies of contemporary play expert Dr. Joe L. Frost were investigated as well as those by other past and present individuals in the field, such as scholar Friedrich Scholler and Brian Sutton-Smith. Their work can be found in the form of articles and books. Frost's book entitled "Play and Playscapes" was purchased, while Paul Wilkinson's text entitled "Innovation in Play Environments" was checked out from Ball State University's Architecture Library. Relevant information was obtained from an article scanned in from the New York Times Magazine entitled "Taking Play Seriously." In addition, recent editions of the American Journal of Play were purchased for review and studies done by the Play Foundation, as found on their website, were compared and contrasted with the rest of the findings.

To evaluate the economic impact of parks, secondary information was used in the form of articles retrieved from online sources. Will Rogers' article entitled "The Economic Benefits of Parks and Open Space" and Peter Harnik and Ben Welle's piece entitled "Measuring the Economic Value of a City Park System" were downloaded from the Trust for Public Land's online site. The data found in these articles describes both the quantitative figures that have been realized through surveys and case studies, as well as the

qualitative aspects of a park that contribute to the improvement of an area's surrounding economic state.

To discover the site's opportunity for incorporating history into the design, both primary and secondary information was obtained. New Bremen's mayor, Jeff Pape, was contacted and interviewed by phone to discover both what the site was and what he wishes it to become. New Bremen's Historical Museum was visited, and information from the New Bremen Historical Association was obtained, both in regards to New Bremen's past. Additional secondary information was obtained from Mark Bernstein's book entitled "New Bremen." This book was gathered from my personal library.

APPENDIX [B]: TIMELINE



APPENDIX [C]: LIST OF FIGURES

APPENDIX [D]: BIBLIOGRAPHY

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This project examined the current formula for playground design and redefined how we view spaces for play. It exemplified that a playground can become more than simply the overused scene of manufactured elements grouped together atop a bed of mulch and proved that significantly changing the way we approach playground design allows for better spaces that enhance creativity and spark imagination in children of all ages.

The project embodied such ideals through the design of a park in New Bremen, Ohio. It took an underutilized space in the heart of the village and transformed it into an imaginative playspace for all to enjoy. As children slide, swing, run, climb, explore, and laugh amidst the redesigned green space, businesses and nearby properties relish in the economic benefits it brings to the community. New Bremen's new playspace serves as the frontrunner for the new wave of innovative playground design. Not only does it provide others with an example of the limitless possibilities we have yet to discover in terms of designing for play, but it will also provides the New Bremen communitiy with a valuable, one-of-a-kind asset that fosters community and creates identity.